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MORE DANISH TALES

also by MARY C. HATCH

13 DANISH TALES

MORE DANISH TALES

Retold by
MARY C. HATCH



ILLUSTRATED BY EDGUN

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NOTE

These stories have been retold from an English translation of Svend Grundtvig's *Folkeeventyr* made by the illustrator, and special thanks are due him for this work.

MORE DANISH TALES



GRAY LEGS

THERE was once a king of England who had an only daughter, and a king of Denmark who had an only son. The prince was very handsome, and the princess equally fair, and so the prince fell in love with her and wished her for his bride. But she would have none of him, for she was a haughty young miss, and when he sent her a gift of six milk-white horses with shoes of gold and reins of silver, she cut off their manes and tails

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and spattered them with mud. And when he sent her a ship with decks of gold and sails of silk, she tore the sails and sank the ship.

"I'd never marry the prince of Denmark," she cried. "I'd sooner marry the first beggar that passed 'neath my window."

"Well," said the prince, "'t is plain to be seen Her Royal Highness must learn a thing or two."

Then he took off his royal robes and dressed himself like a beggarman. He put on old gray trousers and wooden shoes, and he let his whiskers grow and smudged his face and hands. He looked like a real tramp indeed, and not a soul in the world could have guessed he was a prince.

When all was finished, he sailed over to England and went straight to the king's palace. He asked for work in the barnyard, calling himself Gray-legs, but no one would hire him, for he looked too old and feeble to lift so much as a wisp of hay. The stable hands felt sorry for him, however, and so they gave him a bowl of milk and a bed of hay, and he drank the milk and went to bed and slept soundly.

Bright and early in the morning he was up and about, and he said to the chief cowherd, "Since

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you helped me last night, I will help you today. I'll drive all the cattle to pasture for you."

"Very well," said the cowherd. "But mind you drive softly 'neath the window of the princess. She has delicate ears but a very harsh tongue."

"Never fear," said Graylegs.

"And have a good switch handy," said the cowherd.

"That I have," said Graylegs, and from out his pack he took a golden spindle.

"What a beautiful spindle!" said the cowherd. "But how strange that a beggar should own it."

"Oh, a beggar finds many things in his travels," said Graylegs.

"It's really too fine for driving cows," said the cowherd.

"Not for the king's cows," said Graylegs, and off he went with the cattle.

Soon he came to the princess's window, and he flashed the golden spindle in the sunlight. It caught the eye of the princess who was sitting by the open casement, and she cried out with delight. She had never seen anything so beautiful in all the world.

"Stop, stop," she called, leaning from the window. "Let me see what you have there."

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"'T is a spindle too good for any but a princess," said Graylegs.

"Then I must have it," replied the princess. "I will pay you well for it."

"But it is not for sale," said Graylegs.

"But I want it, and I will have it," cried the princess. Then she stamped her foot and ran to her father. "Dear parent, good parent," she cried, "do make that old beggar sell me the golden spindle."

"Alas, I cannot," said the king. "What belongs to the beggar is his alone."

Then the princess set up a great weeping and wailing.

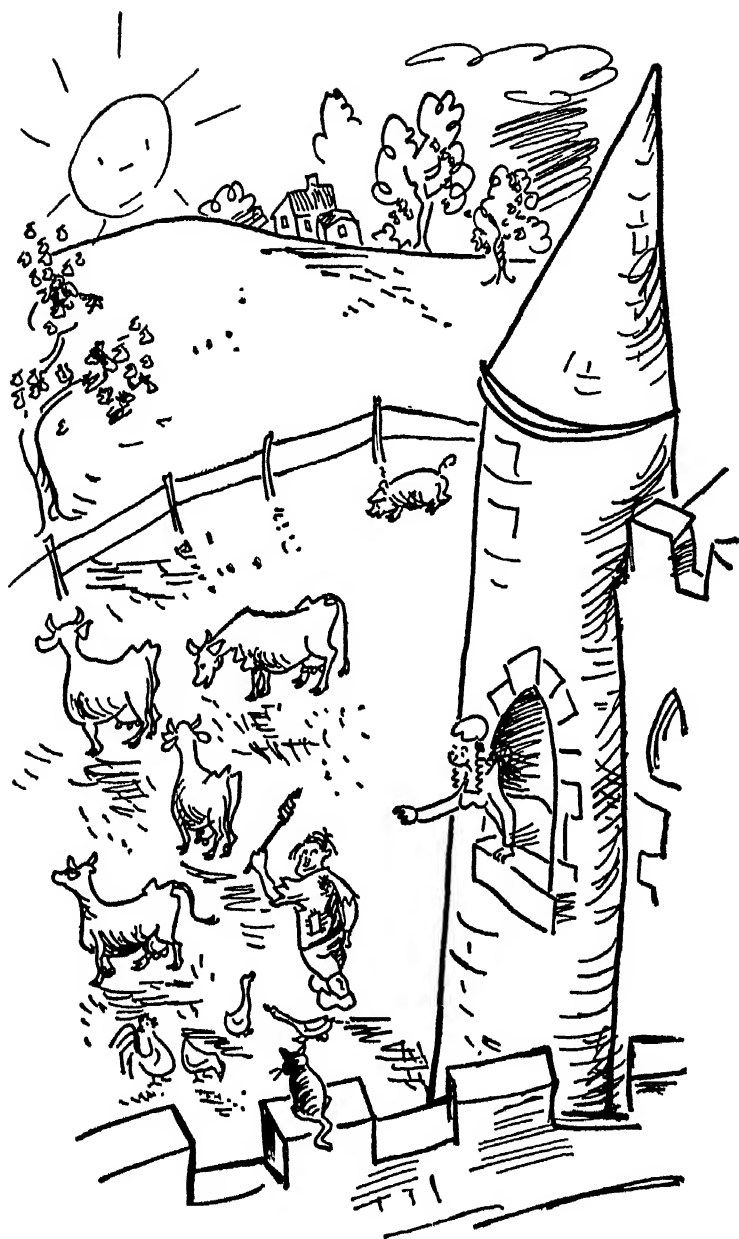
"You may have the spindle on one condition," said Graylegs.

"What is that condition?" asked the princess.

"You must let me sit 'neath your window when the moon rises tonight."

"That's easily done," said the princess, and so Graylegs gave her the spindle, and while she dried her tears, he went on with the cows to the pasture.

That night at moonrise he sat beneath her window, and when the moon went down, he returned to the barn and had a bowl of milk and a bed of



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hay. In the morning he rose early and said to the cowherd, "I thank you for my bed and board, but I wish to repay you a little, and so I'll drive the cows to pasture again today."

"Very well," said the cowherd. "But mind you drive carefully 'neath the princess's window. She has dainty ears but a bold tongue."

"Have no fear," said Graylegs.

"And have a good switch handy," said the cowherd.

"That I have," said Graylegs, and from out his bag he took a long skein of golden silk.

"What beautiful silk!" exclaimed the cowherd. "But how strange that a beggar should own it."

"A beggar finds many things on his way in this world," replied Graylegs.

"It's much too fine for driving cows," said the cowherd.

"'T will find good use, never fear," said Graylegs, and away he went with the cows.

When he came to the princess's window, he waved the silk in the air, and it gleamed like spun gold. The princess caught a glimpse of it, and never had she seen anything so beautiful.

"Stop, stop!" she cried, leaning from her win-

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dow. "Let me see what you have there."

"It is silk too good for any but a princess," said Graylegs.

"Then I must have it," said the princess. "I will pay you well for it."

"It is not for sale," answered the beggarman.

Then the princess set up a dreadful to-do. "Dear Father, good Father," she cried, "do make the beggarman sell me the golden silk."

"Alas, I cannot," said the king. "I am king of the country, but I am not the beggarman's lord and master."

"I will give you the golden silk on one condition," said Graylegs.

"And what is that condition?" asked the princess.

"You must let me sit 'neath your window to-night at moonrise, and you must open your window wide and look down at me."

"That's easily done," said the princess. Then she received the skein of silk, and Graylegs went on with the cows to the pasture.

That night at moonrise, Graylegs came and sat beneath the princess's window, and she opened wide the casement and looked down at him. Then

when the moon was low, he rose quietly and went back to the barn to a bowl of milk and a bed of hay.

The next morning he was up early and said to the cowherd, "I thank you for my bed and board, but I must repay you a bit, so I'll drive the cows to pasture once more."

"Very well," said the cowherd. "But mind you drive carefully past the princess's window. She has tender ears and a sharp tongue."

"Have no fear," said Graylegs.

"And have a good switch handy," said the cowherd.

"That I have," said Graylegs, and he drew out a golden shuttle.

"What a beautiful shuttle!" exclaimed the cowherd. "But how strange that a beggar should own it."

"A beggar goes here and there and picks up a thing or two," replied Graylegs.

"It's too fine for driving cows," said the cowherd.

"'T will do its duty well, never fear," said Graylegs, and away he went with the cows.

When he came to the princess's window, he

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waved the shuttle in the sunlight, and it shone like fire. The princess sat near by with the spindle and the silk, and at sight of the glittering shuttle she cried, "Stop, stop, let me see what you have there."

"It is a shuttle too good for any but a princess," answered Graylegs.

"Then I must have it," said the princess. "I will pay you well for it."

"It is not for sale," said Graylegs.

Then the princess set up a dreadful hue and cry. "Dear Father, good Father," she cried to the king, "tell the beggarman he must sell me the golden shuttle. I have the spindle and thread, and now I must have the shuttle, too."

"Alas," said the king, "I can tell the beggarman nothing. I am the king, but I am not his lord and master."

"I will give you the shuttle on one condition," said Graylegs.

"What is your condition?" asked the princess.

"You must let me sit 'neath your window when the moon rises tonight."

"Oh, yes, indeed, that is easy enough."

"And you must open wide your window and

look down at me."

"That is as simple as A B C."

"And then you must answer yes when I speak to you."

"That will be nothing at all," said the princess, and so Graylegs gave her the golden shuttle, and then away he went with the cows.

And that evening when the moon came up, there he sat beneath the princess's window, and she opened it and looked down at him. Her face was fair as milk, her hair shone like silver, and all in all, she was the prettiest princess ever seen in the world.

"Well," said Graylegs, "you're pretty as a picture, and prettier still, so now I'll take you for my bride."

"Oh, no," cried the princess.

"You have promised to say yes," said Graylegs.

"But you are only an old beggarman," said the princess.

"A promise is a promise," said Graylegs, and the king agreed with him, and so the princess had to marry him. And then they were shown the door. They could go wherever they wished, but of course they couldn't stay at the palace.

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They started on their way, and when they came to the cow barn, Graylegs said, "You can't tramp over the countryside dressed like a princess in silks and satins. You must wear something suited to a beggar's wife." And so she had to trade clothes with the cowherd's wife and put on a coarse dress and wooden shoes, and no one would have guessed in a thousand years that she had once been a proud princess.

They walked for a day and a night till they came to the sea, and there they got on a boat and sailed over the water to Denmark, though the princess little knew or cared where they went. They landed near the palace, and Graylegs took the princess to live in a mean little hut not far away. The bed was covered with straw, the chairs were broken, and the open fire smoked badly.

Through the window could be seen the tall round spires of the king's palace, and at sight of them the princess cried, "Alas, I could have married the Prince of Denmark, but I would not."

"It's no use worrying over spilt milk," said the beggar. Then he brought out a ball of wool and an old spinning wheel. "Now," said he, "I must seek work and earn a penny or two. But you must

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not be idle while I am gone. You must spin this wool and make cloth for our clothes."

Then he went off to find work, and the princess sat down at the spinning wheel. But she got nowhere fast, for the spindle pricked her fingers, the wool twisted and broke, and her poor knees were sore from working the treadle.

"Oh, dear!" she cried. "Graylegs will certainly be angry when he sees me tonight, but it's no more than I deserve."

Then she sat and wept, and when Graylegs came home that night and saw her bleeding fingers and the broken yarn, he said, "Well, I see we'll go cold and naked if we must depend upon your spinning. Tomorrow I'll bring you some dishes, and you can sell them in the market place. That's easy work, and even a princess should be able to do it."

"I will try," the princess replied.

"Very well," said Graylegs. "And now let us have a bit to eat. Fortunately I earned a penny or two so we will not starve." Then he brought out a loaf of bread and a jug of milk, and they ate and drank, and then went to bed on their hard cots.

The next day Graylegs brought the princess a barrel of dishes and she set them up in the market

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place and tried to sell them. But she had little luck for the day was cold and she couldn't count pennies well. Then worse luck befell her for a handsome young fellow came riding by on a prancing horse, and he rode straight through the dishes and broke them into a thousand pieces.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" wailed the princess. "Graylegs will surely turn me out now and I'll have no home at all. I wouldn't take a prince and I'm no use to a poor man." And she went home and wept some more.

When Graylegs returned that evening, he said, "Well, did you have a good day at the market place? If we make a penny or two more, perhaps we can find better lodgings."

"The crockery is broken," cried the princess.

"That is terrible," said Graylegs. "I had not paid for it, and now I'll be thrown into jail."

"Oh, no!" moaned the princess. "You must not go to jail. I must do something to pay for the crockery."

"Well, perhaps I can get you a place in the palace kitchen," said Graylegs. "I have a place in the stable, and I have heard there is going to be a wedding and that extra help will be needed in the

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kitchen."

"I will do anything I can," said the princess.

"You should do very nicely as palace help," said Graylegs. "But tonight we must eat and drink," and he brought out a loaf of bread and a jug of milk. He shared it equally with the princess, and they ate and drank, and then went early to bed.

In the morning Graylegs found a place for her and she went to work in the palace kitchen. Everyone was bustling about making preparations for the wedding, and she worked all day scrubbing floors and washing dishes and fetching one thing and another for the cooks and bakers. She had the hardest tasks of all, for of course she was only a princess and hadn't been trained to do fine cooking or baking, or even to polish silver or dry fine glassware.

Toward evening, however, the head cook sent her to wait on the king's table. He gave her a pot of stew filled with dumplings and told her to mind it carefully for it was the king's favorite dish. Full of fear and trembling, she crept into the dining room holding the precious stew tight in both hands. But just as she reached the table, a handsome courtier bumped into her, and down went the stew

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all over the floor.

"What a clumsy servant," cried the courtier. "Be off with you at once or I'll turn you over to the king and have your head chopped off."

And out went the poor princess crying as though her heart would break. When she got home, she found her husband there ahead of her.

"Well, at last you've earned a penny or two," he said, "and now we can pay off our debts and have a sweet for supper."

But, alas, no, the princess was as poor as ever, and they'd have none of her in the palace kitchen. "You'd best turn me out, too," said the princess. "I'm no use to man or beast."

"I can't turn you out," said Graylegs. "I married you for better or worse. But we'll not fret about it. We'll have a bit of supper now, and tomorrow perhaps I can find something else for you to do." Then he brought out a loaf of bread and a jug of milk. He gave half to the princess and half to himself, and they ate and drank, and then went early to bed.

The next day Graylegs came home rejoicing. "I've found another place for you at the palace," he said. "The seamstresses are coming to finish the

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wedding gowns and try them on for size and fit. But the bride has not yet arrived from Sweden, and as you are the same size and fit, the gowns will be tried on you. You can do all this well, I am sure, for it is no more than what a princess usually does."

"But, alas, I am a princess no longer," the poor girl said sadly.

"Still you must earn a penny where you can," said Graylegs, and the princess agreed with him. So the next morning she returned to the palace. She put on all the fine clothes of the bride, the long satin gown, the veil that was filmy as butterfly wings, the dainty satin slippers, and the lovely golden crown. Everything fitted her just right, as if it had been especially made for her, and once again she looked like the princess she really was.

When the seamstresses were all finished, the princess prepared to take off the bridal finery, but the chief lady-in-waiting stopped her. "Now you must ride to the church and practice for the wedding," she said. "The bride will be very late arriving from Sweden."

The princess was then led to a carriage lined with velvet and covered with gold. It was drawn by six milk-white horses shod with silver and harnessed

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with gold, and following behind, in an equally splendid carriage, came the Prince of Denmark himself. He was dressed in his royal robes with a crown upon his head, and he looked as tall and handsome as the day is long.

The way led past the poor cottage where the princess and Graylegs lived. As the carriages neared it, the princess saw that the house was afire and soon would be burned to the ground.

"Oh, stop, stop," she cried, and she tried to jump out, but only succeeded in tangling her long train and veil, and dropping her crown.

The carriages stopped and the prince came running up. "What is the meaning of all this?" he cried. "You are ruining the bridal finery."

"I cannot help it," sobbed the poor princess. "That is my house you see burning, and my poor husband may be trapped in it. I must save him."

"But what do you care about an old tramp like that?" said the prince.

"I was little use to him, but he's been good to me," said the princess. "He shared what he had with me."

"Do you really wish to see Graylegs?" asked the king's son.

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"Yes, with all my heart," said the princess.

"Very well," said the prince, "you shall have your wish," and he disappeared around the corner of the carriage.

In a moment up came Graylegs, gray trousers, old hat, wooden shoes, and all, and the princess threw her arms around him and kissed him. Then she saw that her Graylegs was none other than the prince himself, and she kissed him again and was so sorry for all the cruel things she had once said that she never spoke a mean or haughty word the rest of her life.

She became Princess of Denmark and later Queen, and though it all happened so long ago there's no one left who remembers seeing her, still it's quite true that she was the prettiest and kindest queen ever to sit on the throne of Denmark, excepting the one who sits there now, of course.



THE TREASURE

ONCE upon a time a poor peasant was plowing his fields, when what should he strike but a great chest full of old money.

"Well, what a lucky fellow I am," he cried. "The man who buried this money is long since dead, so I can claim it for my own. I'll be as rich as any squire, and I'll live in a big house, and dress my wife like a lady."

Then home he went, taking the treasure with

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him and leaving the plowing behind.

"See what I've found," he said to his wife. "It's a treasure that lay buried in the field where I was plowing."

"Well, I do declare," said the old woman. "I'd never have guessed there was so much gold in the world. I must run and tell the neighbors."

"No, that you must not," said the old man. "We must keep the news of our good fortune to ourselves, or we'll be sure to lose it all."

"Very well then, I'll not speak a word about it," said the old woman, and she meant to keep still, too. But somehow or other, her tongue got to wagging, and a word was dropped here and another word there, and soon her friends and neighbors knew all about it, and then they told their friends and neighbors, till finally the news reached the squire.

"Well!" said the squire. "I never knew anyone to have money in this part of the country except my good relatives, so by rights that money must belong to me, and I mean to have it."

Then he had his servant saddle his horse, and away he rode to the peasant's house. The peasant lived far out on the heath, and no one was home

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but his wife. He himself had gone to town to put his money in the bank.

"Good day, my good woman," said the squire. "I hear you're doing very well these days."

"We can't complain," said the good woman.

"But of course you have to slave hard from morn till night to make all your money," said the squire.

"Not at all," said the woman. "The fact is, we hardly work at all these days."

"You don't say!" exclaimed the squire. "Well, I do declare, that's very strange. I should have thought you worked your fingers to the bone."

"We're very lucky," said the old woman. "We found a treasure when my husband was out plowing one day, and now we can sit and take life easy the rest of our days."

"How I would like to see that treasure!" said the squire. "I'm a poor man in spite of my lands and titles, and I've never seen a goodly pile of gold."

"Well, I would show it to you if I could," said the wife, "but, alas, I cannot, for I haven't the least idea where it is kept."

"That is sad, indeed," said the squire. "Your husband should not treat you in such a fashion. But perhaps he'll mend his ways, and you'll know an-

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other time." Then hiding his disappointment as best he could, he bade the old woman good-bye and returned home, quite determined to come another day when he could corner the old man and woman together.

A little later the old woman's husband returned. "Well," said he, "I had a pleasant day in town, and I hope you fared as nicely here on the heath."

"I had a visit from the squire," said the wife, "and he was most pleased to learn that we are rich. He even wished to see the treasure himself."

"He did, indeed!" said the old man. "And of course you showed it to him?"

"Alas, I could not," said the wife, "for you have not told me where it is hidden."

"Dear me," said the old man, "I am so forgetful. But now I have something to ask you, good wife. Would you like to go to town with me tomorrow?"

"I would, indeed," said the wife. "I'd like a new bonnet and shawl, and some ribbons and yarn."

The old man was pleased to hear that, and so in the morning he hitched up the wagon, and they went to town again. The husband bought his wife all the finery she could ever wear and filled her to the brim with cakes and tarts and sugarplums.

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Then he bought a bushel of white bread which he hid under the wagon seat so his wife could not see it and they started for home.

Now it was late fall and both windy and rainy, but the wife had been so well treated that she sat warm as toast in the wagon and fell into a doze at once. When they had been on the road a short while, however, something hit her square in the face and awakened her, and looking down, she saw that it was a big piece of white bread. She picked it up in some surprise and threw it out of the wagon and then tried to go back to sleep, but another piece struck her, and another, and another, pelting her like snowballs.

"Look, good husband," she cried, "see what is happening. It seems to be raining white bread."

"Yes," said her husband, "it *is* raining white bread. We're having frightful weather."

Then the white bread stopped, so the wife fell back to sleep again, and the old man drove on till they came to the squire's estate. Here the good wife was aroused again by the dreadful sound of a donkey braying.

"Eee-ah, eee-ah," screamed the donkey, and the wife cried, "Oh, dear husband, what is that ter-

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rible noise?"

"Alas, I cannot tell you," said her husband.

"But you must," cried the woman. "It frightens me out of my wits."

"If I tell you, then you must promise not to say a word about it to anyone," said her husband.

"That I promise," the wife answered.

"Very well," said the husband. "It's the devil beating the squire. The devil, you see, has lent him money, but he can't get it back, and so he's flogging him within an inch of his life."

"Oh, dear!" cried the old woman. "Let us get away from here."

"Let us, indeed," said the old man, and he whipped his horses, and they ran away as fast as they could.

They reached home not long afterwards, and when they had had a bit of food, the man said to his wife, "Listen, little wife, I have very sad news for you."

"What has happened now?" cried the old woman.

"I learned in town today that the enemy has invaded our country and will arrive here tonight."

"Heaven help us," cried the old woman.

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"What's to become of us?"

"You must hide in the potato cellar, and there you'll be safe from harm," said the old man. "But I must take my trusty gun and protect our house as best I can."

The wife went crying to the cellar and dug herself in among the potatoes till only her head was showing. Then the old man took down his gun, went outside and shouted commands, and shot off his gun. It was only blank shot with which the gun was filled, but it made a dreadful noise, and that was all that mattered. He kept up the noise till morning, and then he brought up his wife from the cellar and said, "Well, I stood my ground, and we're saved from the enemy. I managed to shoot most of the soldiers, and the rest ran away, dragging the dead ones with them."

"What a brave man you are," said his wife. "Just wait till the squire hears about this."

"Oh, it was nothing at all," said the man. "The squire, no doubt, did as well himself." And with that the matter was dropped, the man asked for a bit of breakfast, and then lay down for a few winks of sleep.

A day or so later, the squire came riding up to



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the house again, and this time it was the old man whom he met first.

"How goes the new-found treasure?" asked the squire.

"Well," said the farmer, "I've a good potato crop, but I'd hardly call that a treasure."

"It's no use to hide anything," said the squire. "I have it from the lips of your own wife that you dug up a treasure not long ago when you were plowing in the field."

"Alas," said the peasant, "my poor wife is given to telling tall tales. One cannot believe every word she says."

"We'll see about that," said the squire. Then he called to the wife. "Now, my good woman, did you or did you not tell me that your husband found a chest of gold when he was plowing not long ago?"

"Yes, I did tell you," said the good woman, full of fear and trembling. "I remember it very well, for the very next day we went to town to buy ribbons and silks and all sorts of good things, and on the way back we had a frightful storm, and it rained white bread."

"What!" cried the squire. "What day did it ever

rain white bread?"

"Why, it was the day the enemy invaded the country and my husband had to fight all night long to put them to rout," said the old woman.

"Battles and enemies!" cried the squire. "Why, I think the woman's mad. When did an enemy invade the country?"

"Well—" said the woman. Then she stopped and tried not to tell, but had to come out with it at last. "It was the same day that the devil was beating you for not repaying the money you owed him."

"Devil indeed!" cried the squire. "I'll send the devil to whip you for all the tales you carry." And with that he jumped on his horse and rode home and never spoke to the farmer again. Then the farmer bought a fine farm, the best in the country, and he and his good woman lived happily the rest of their days.



THE LITTLE DUCK

ONCE upon a time there was a woodcutter who had a young daughter and son. They were all poor as church mice, but happy in spite of that, and when the son went away to be a soldier and serve the king, the daughter stayed at home with her father and took care of the house. She was good and industrious, and pretty besides, and all went well till the village lads came courting her. Then her father feared she would marry soon

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and leave him to look after himself, which he could never do, so he looked about the village, and when he saw a likely widow, he married again.

Now the widow had a daughter who was as ugly and lazy as the other girl was pretty and industrious, and the widow, alas, was lazy, too. Both kept the man and his daughter working from morning till night, and the poor souls had never a moment to rest.

Then one winter day the man and his daughter went to the forest to gather wood, and when they turned back toward home, the man forgot his gloves.

"Oh, dear daughter," he cried when he discovered the loss, "I shall have to go back to the forest at once, for I've left my gloves behind and they are the only ones I own."

"I'll get them for you, Father," said the girl. "I'll run quickly and be back in no time at all."

The father consented for he was very tired and weary, and the girl turned back into the woods. She soon reached the spot where they had been working, and there on the ground lay the gloves, but three little birds had taken possession of them and were snuggled against them to keep warm.

THE LITTLE DUCK

"Oh, dear!" cried the girl. "Now what will I do? Those poor little birds have a right to keep warm, and yet I must have my father's gloves. Well, perhaps I can find something else for the birds," and she looked about till she found some nice soft moss.

"This moss will do very well," she said, and laying it down beside the gloves, she gently lifted the birds and placed them on it. Then she picked up the gloves and ran back to her father.

"What a considerate young lady she was," said the birds as they settled themselves on the moss. "We must now do something to help her. What will it be?"

"Well," said the first bird, "let us each make a wish for her. I will wish that she may be the most beautiful girl in the world."

"That is indeed a good wish," said the second one, "and I will wish that every time she speaks, diamonds and pearls may fall from her mouth."

"That is indeed a fine wish," said the third, "so I will wish that whenever she combs her hair, gold and silver will shower about her."

The birds' wishes came true at once, and when the girl reached home, she was greatly changed.

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Lovely though she had been, she was now lovelier still. When she opened her mouth to speak, out fell diamonds and pearls, and when she combed her hair, gold and silver showered down about her.

The father rejoiced greatly to see the change, for now his dear daughter would never again have to work from morn till night. The stepmother rejoiced, too, for she dearly loved the sight of gold; and her stepdaughter, good and generous as she was, gave her all she wanted and more. She also bought a castle where the whole family was welcome, and she hired many servants, and everyone lived like kings and queens.

But the stepmother was not entirely happy, for it grieved her that her own daughter was so ugly and good-for-nothing.

Finally she said to her husband, "If only my daughter were as clever and pretty as yours, then we'd have nothing to fear."

"But we've nothing to fear as things stand," said the man.

"Yes, indeed, we have," said the woman. "Your daughter is sure to meet a duke or a prince and marry him, and then all her gold will be his and we'll get none of it, and we'll have to move back



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to the woodcutter's hut and starve the rest of our days."

"Well, that may be true enough," said the man, "but there's nought I can do to stop it."

"Oh, you can go to the woods once more and take my daughter with you and let her win the gifts of beauty and wealth, too. And then when your own daughter has married and gone far away, my dear child will take care of us to the end of our days, for she would never leave my side, not even for a prince."

His wife's plan seemed reasonable enough, so the next day the man returned to the woods, taking the stepdaughter with him, though she complained bitterly about having to go. In the middle of the forest, the man left his gloves, and when they were outside again, he said to the girl, "Oh, dear, stepdaughter mine, I've left my gloves in the forest. Now what will I do?"

"Well, there are more where they came from, you stupid old man," retorted the girl; but when the man begged her to return for them, she finally did so, for her mother had made her promise to do whatever the stepfather asked, since it was in this way only that she could become as rich and beauti-

ful as her stepsister.

The girl had no trouble at all in finding the gloves. They lay on the ground just where her father had left them, but three little birds were now in possession of them and were snuggling against them to keep warm.

"Oh, what thieves you are," cried the girl, and she snatched the gloves from under the birds, struck them across the heads, and ran off.

"Well," said the birds to each other, "what a bad girl she is! What shall we do to repay her?"

"Let us each make her a bad, bad wish," said the first bird. "I will wish her to be the ugliest girl in the world."

"That is just the wish for such a hateful girl," said the second bird. "Now I will wish that every time she speaks, toads and lizards will jump from her mouth."

"That is a better wish still," said the third bird. "Now I will wish that whenever she combs her hair, worms and snakes will fall from it."

The wishes came true that instant, and when the girl reached home she was greatly changed. Ugly though she had been, she was now uglier still. When she tried to speak, lizards and toads popped

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out of her mouth, and when she combed her hair, down rained worms and snakes. She was so horrible that no one could bear to look at her, not even her own mother, and she was shut away in a big room by herself and no one ever came near her.

Now after a time the son came home from the king's service to pay his father and sister a visit, and when he saw how beautiful his sister was and that diamonds and pearls fell from her lips and gold and silver from her hair, he resolved to tell the mighty monarch about her at the first opportunity.

The king was looking for a suitable wife, one who had beauty and money besides, but so far he had met with little success. Many a maiden had come his way, but the fair ones had no money, and the wealthy ones had no beauty. Then one day he received the picture of a princess from far away who was said to be both beautiful and rich, and so he decided he would take her for his bride.

He showed the picture about the palace to let everyone know of his success, and when it came to the eyes of the young lad, he said, "She is lovely, indeed, but I know someone far lovelier and quite as wealthy, too."

"Well," cried the king, "who is this lovely crea-

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ture of whom you boast?"

"She is my sister, and she is the most beautiful girl in the world."

"Then I must see her at once," said the king, "and if what you say is true, I will marry her, and she shall be queen beside me. But if you speak falsely, then you'll be thrown into the snake pit, and that will be the end of you."

The lad assured him that he spoke nothing but the truth, so the king fitted a ship with sails of silk and decks of gold, and sent messengers to the girl asking her to come and visit her brother and have a look at the king besides.

"Well," said the girl, "I will go, for I would like very much to visit my brother and it would be nice to see the king, too, though what one says to a king, I really don't know."

"You curtsy and bow and speak when spoken to," said the stepmother. "But you cannot go alone, so my daughter and I will go with you. I will cover her face with a heavy veil so no one can see her, and I'll not let her speak or comb her hair, so she'll be no trouble at all."

To this the girl agreed, and very soon they started on their way. But when they were far out

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at sea, the stepmother shoved the beautiful girl into the sea and left her there to drown. Then she sailed on to the king's palace and was received with much pomp and ceremony.

She was given the best rooms in the palace, and the king said to her, "It was very good of you to pay us a visit, and when you're pleased to unveil your fair daughter, I'll be most pleased to meet her."

"She must first rest," said the wicked woman, "for she is very tired."

"To be sure," said the king, and he went away and waited an hour and a day. Then he returned and said, "Now let me see the lovely girl, I pray. I cannot eat nor sleep till I have had a glimpse of her."

"But first we must dress her like a princess," said the dreadful woman, and so the king had to go away again.

He waited another hour and a day, and then he returned and said, "I'll now be pleased to meet your beautiful daughter, for she has long since had time to rest and be dressed like a princess."

"But she is so shy and bashful," said the sinful woman. "First let her get used to living in this

beautiful palace."

But the king would wait no longer, and he commanded his servants to tear off the girl's veil. Then, when he saw how ugly she was, and that toads and lizards jumped out of her mouth the minute she spoke, he was dreadfully angry. He threw the woman and her daughter into prison, and tossed the young man into the snake pit.

Now you must know that the beautiful girl had not drowned in the sea, but had turned into a duck and swum across the ocean till she reached the king's palace. Then in the evening she had come ashore and waddled up to the king's back door and into the kitchen. There lay a little dog named Wagtail that belonged to the young man and now was grieving for his master.

"Do you sleep, little Wagtail?" asked the duck.

"Indeed, I do not," said the dog.

"Is my brother out of the snake pit?" asked the duck.

"Alas, he is not," said the dog.

"Has the king taken the ugly one to love and to cherish?" asked the duck.

"No, that he has not," replied the dog.

"That is good," said the duck, and on she wad-

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dled into the pantry where the cook saw her and threw her some scraps. The duck ate the scraps, and then went back to the dog. She shook her feathers, and a shower of gold and silver fell about her.

"This is for the good cook's goodness," she said. "Now, little Wagtail, pray that someone will be equally good and change me to a girl again, for I can come only two nights more, and if no one saves me by then, I am lost and will have to stay a duck forever."

"I will do what I can," said the dog, as the duck waddled out, and he barked furiously for the cook to come in to him. The cook put his head in the door, and when he saw all the gold and silver, he was very surprised and very pleased.

"Well, if the little duck comes again," he said, "I shall have to do something really good for it. I will give it a feast instead of scraps, for it is truly a wonderful duck."

The next night the little duck returned, and going straight to the kitchen where Wagtail lay grieving, she said, "Do you sleep, little dog?"

"Indeed, I do not," said the dog.

"Is my brother out of the snake pit?" asked the

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duck.

"Alas, he is not," said the dog.

"Has the king taken the ugly one to love and to cherish?" asked the duck.

"No, that he has not," said the dog.

"That is good," said the little duck, and then on she went into the pantry. Here the cook gave her a feast from the king's own larder, and when she had eaten, she returned to the dog and shook her feathers so that gold and silver rained down about her.

"This is for the good cook's goodness," she said. "Now, little Wagtail, pray that someone can change me to a girl again, for I can come only one night more, and if no one saves me, then I am truly lost, and I must stay a duck forever."

"I will do what I can," said the dog, and when the little duck waddled out he barked wildly for the cook to come to him.

The cook came at once, and when he saw all the gold and silver, he cried, "That is indeed a wonderful duck. I must tell the king about it at once."

"Well," said the king when the cook had finished the story, "we must learn more about this little creature. Now, when it comes again, you

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must close everything tight so it cannot get out, and then you must call me wherever I am, and I will come at once."

That night at sundown back came the duck, and going straight to the kitchen where Wagtail lay grieving, she said, "Do you sleep, little Wagtail?"

"Indeed, I do not," said the dog.

"Is my brother out of the snake pit?"

"Alas, he is not," said the dog.

"Has the king taken the ugly one to love and to cherish?" asked the duck.

"No, that he has not," said the dog, and then the duck walked into the pantry where the cook was waiting for her. The cook fed her a fine dinner, and while she ate, he stopped up the windows and doors and called for the king.

The king was waiting not far away, and in he ran and caught the little duck.

"Thank you," said the little duck.

"Well," said the king, "so you can speak as well as give gold and silver!"

"Yes," said the little duck, "for I am not really a duck at all, but only a young girl laid under an enchantment. And now, good king, I will ask you to help me, for if I stay a duck tonight, I will stay

a duck forever."

"I will do what I can," said the king.

"You must take up your knife and chop off my head," said the little duck.

"That is a hard task, for you are a dear little duck, but I will do it," said the king. So he took up his knife, but at the very first stroke, the duck disappeared and in its place stood a beautiful girl.

"I am my brother's sister whom you sent for to see," explained the girl. "But my stepmother threw me into the ocean, and I was changed into a duck."

"What a wicked woman," cried the king, "for truly you are the most beautiful girl in the world, and rich or poor, I will marry you and none other."

Then he sent for her brother whom the snakes had not harmed, and he sent for her father, and they were married with great pomp and splendor. The cruel stepmother and her ugly daughter were turned out into the woods to take care of themselves as best they could, but they soon died of envy, both of them, and that was good riddance. Then the king and his bride and her father and brother all lived happily ever after.



ESBEN ASHBLOWER

ONCE upon a time there was a king who had an only daughter. She was both beautiful and clever, but she had a sharp temper and a sharper tongue, and the noise she made was quite dreadful to hear.

This state of affairs angered the king a good bit, for he liked to have life peaceful and quiet about the palace, and one day he reached the end of his patience. Then he swore that whoever could make the princess stop talking, be he rich man, poor man,

beggarman, or thief, could have half the kingdom, and could marry the princess, too, if he wished.

The proclamation was posted on all the street corners and read in all the churches and schools so that there would not be a soul in the kingdom who did not know about it, and before long the palace was swarming with young men who were sure they could outtalk a mere woman. But not a one of them succeeded, alas and alack, and out they all went to be ducked in the palace pool, and hung up with the palace wash, and then banished from the kingdom forever.

Out in the country, far away from the court, there lived a farmer who had three sons. They were called Per, Paul, and Esben Ashblower. Esben, alas, was considered quite a dunce, for he had always been too busy working ever to take up learning, but the two oldest passed for very smart fellows. They had been to college and could talk ever so well, and when they heard the king's proclamation, they decided they were just the fellows to put the princess in her place. Then one of them would marry her, the other one would be prime minister, and between the two of them, they'd run the kingdom to suit themselves.

Their father agreed with them, for he was very proud of their learning, and so he dressed them like gentlemen, gave them handsome horses with silver bridles and gold-tassled manes, and they were ready to start on their way.

Now no thought had been given to Esben who was working away on the farm as usual, but when his brothers rode through the barnyard gate, he decided that he would like to try his luck, too, and so he ran after them crying, "Wait, wait! I want to go with you."

"Oh, no, indeed," exclaimed his brothers. "You can't talk loud and long."

"But I can do other things," said Esben.

"And you're not wearing silks and satins."

"Oh, I needn't dress like a prince," said Esben. "I'm handsome enough as it is."

"And you haven't a horse," said the brothers.

"Then I'll ride shank's pony," said Esben, "but I will go along," and he followed after them as best he could.

When they had gone a bit of the way, Esben shouted, "Hi there, look what I've found!"

"And pray, what have you discovered?" asked the brothers, and they tossed a glance over their

shoulders.

The lad had found only a scrawny plucked fowl that had been lost from somebody's market basket. "But I'll take it along to the king's palace," he said. "One never knows what it may be good for."

"Oh, but you are a stupid fellow," said his brothers and rode farther ahead while he tagged behind them.

When they had gone another bit of the way, Esben called out again, "Hi there, look what I've found!" But the brothers went on without looking back, and it was just as well, for the lad's new treasure was only an old piece of wire. "But I'll not throw it away," he said. "No one knows what it may be good for." And he stuffed it into his pocket and ran on.

When he had gone still a bit farther, he shouted, "Hi there, see what I've found!" But the brothers were too far ahead to hear him at all, and besides, the treasure was only an old bottle cork. But still and all, it might have its use, so down it went into the boy's pocket with the fowl and the wire.

A little later he stopped again and shouted, "Hi there, see what I've found!" This time it was a ram's horn. And soon after, he found another ram's

horn, and both went into his pocket with the fowl and the wire and the cork.

Finally he stopped for the last time and shouted, "Hi there, see what I've found!" It was a beautiful little pancake of mud and he really treasured it, so down it went into his pocket with the fowl and the wire and the cork and the two ram's horns. And with his pockets now filled to bursting, he went on his way.

In the meantime, Per and Paul had arrived at the king's palace, and as Per was the eldest, it was decided that he should be the one to make the princess stop talking.

"I have come to silence the sharp tongue of the princess," said Per to the guards.

"'T is a pity to spoil your fine silks and satins," said the guards.

"Enough of your impudence," said Per. "Show me in to the princess at once."

"As you wish," said the guards, and he was taken into the palace.

The princess sat in a golden chair chattering like a jay bird, and not far away sat the poor king with his fingers in his ears.

"Good day, Your Royal Highness," said Per,

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bowing so low his head hit the floor.

"It's not a good day," said the princess. "It's bound to rain. And you'll be higher than I when they hang you out to dry."

At such talk from a princess, Per lost his head and his voice, too, and he couldn't think of a thing in the world to say. Then in a moment his chance was gone, and out the guards dragged him, ducked him in the palace pool, and hung him up to dry.

Paul's turn now came, and though the guards warned him 't was little use to try, he would listen to none of them, and they had to let him go in.

"Good morning, Your Royal Highness," said Paul, and he bowed so low he hit the floor twice.

"It's not a good morning. It's bound to rain," said the princess. "And you'll be higher than I when they hang you up to dry."

At the sound of such talk from a princess, Paul lost his tongue and his mind, too, and he couldn't think of a thing in the world to say. Then, alas, in a moment his chance was gone, and out the guards dragged him, ducked him in the palace pool, and hung him up with his brother to dry.

"Are there any more suitors?" shouted the princess.

Yes, indeed, and the door popped open, and in came Esben Ashblower looking as ragged and dirty as a beggar lad. He had had to run the whole way and fight the palace guards besides, but he wanted to see the princess, and here he was.

"Whew, it's a hot day," he said.

"No hotter than yesterday," said the princess.

"But hot enough to roast my little fowl, I do believe," said Esben, and he took the plucked fowl from his pocket and showed it to the princess.

"He's not properly tied," cried the princess.

"Oh, we can soon fix that," said Esben, and he pulled out the wire.

"There's not enough wire," said the princess.
"The fat will run out the end."

"This will stop it," said Esben, and he pulled out the cork.

"You think you're a very clever fellow," said the princess, "but we'll find a way to hang you just the same."

"Did you say hang?" asked Esben. "Well, here is just the hook on which to hang anything you please," and he hauled out one of the ram's horns.

"Well, I declare!" said the princess. "I've never seen the like."

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"You soon will," said Esben, and out came the other ram's horn which he tried to put in her hand.

"Oh, get away from me with your dirt," cried the princess.

"That isn't dirt, but this is," said Esben, and then he pulled the mud cake out of his pocket and threw it in her lap, and it broke in a dozen pieces and spoiled her lovely silk dress.

She grew so angry then that she couldn't find word to answer Esben, and for the first time in her life, the room was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop. Then the princess jumped up and shook her skirts and burst into tears. But still she couldn't say a word.

"Well," said Esben, brushing the dirt off his hands, "you've run down now, so I'll claim you for my bride."

"Yes, indeed," exclaimed the king, "and don't let her wind herself up again."

This Esben promised, and as soon as the princess had dried her tears and brushed off her gown, and as soon as Esben had dressed in fine clothes, they were married. The princess learned to think more and speak less, and when the king died, she and Esben reigned together, and they lived happily ever after.



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"Well, then," said the man, "you can seek it with me, for I need just such a fellow as you. And I will pay you good wages, too—one bushel of money the first year, two bushels the second, and three the third. But you must promise to stay the full three years, and you must do everything I ask, no matter how unpleasant you find it, for otherwise I will have to discharge you and you'll earn not a penny for all your pains."

"I'm not afraid of hard work, and little else would be painful," said the lad, and so the bargain was agreed to, and he went home with the man. It was a strange place, not at all like your house or mine, set inside a hill in the middle of a wild forest, and the man was strange, too, for all he looked so rich and prosperous. In fact, he was not a man at all, but a great and powerful troll, and he had dreadful power over both men and animals.

It was now too late for the lad to worry about the company he was in, however, and so he put it out of his mind, and ate well and slept well, and then in the morning was ready for work.

"You must first feed all my animals," said the troll. "And though there's a whole forestful of

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them, and the barns are a mile long and a mile underground, still you must finish the task in one day."

"I will do what I can," said the lad, and he set to work at once.

The barns were filled to the brim with deer and bears and wolves and hares, all enchanted by the troll, and hungry enough to eat the lad. But he worked with might and main, and by night the task was all finished.

"Well," said the troll, "I don't see how you did it, but now that it's done, you deserve a good supper and a good night's rest, so take them and welcome to them."

The lad ate well and slept well, and in the morning the troll said to him, "The animals are not to be fed today, for you did extra well by them yesterday, and there's no need to spoil them. Now you may play and do as you please till it's time to feed them again."

"Thank you," said the lad. "That will be fine, indeed."

But as he turned to leave, the troll caught him by the collar and cried,

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*"Mumble, jumble, turn and tumble,
Be a hare and do not fumble,"*

and there and then the boy was changed into a hare, and jumping away from the troll, he went leaping into the forest.

But he had little fun in the forest for he was the first and only animal seen there in a long, long time, and as soon as the hunters heard of him, they tried to catch him. They had no luck, however, for his legs were long and his eyes were sharp, and he managed to keep well out of their reach. In this way a year and a day went by, and then the troll called him home again.

*"Mumble, jumble, turn and tumble,
Be a boy and do not fumble,"*

said the troll, and in a second the lad had his own shape again.

"Well," said the troll, "now that you're back safe and sound, how did you like the life of a hare?"

"I liked it well enough," said the boy. "I could run faster and leap farther than ever before."

"But of course you've no wish to serve me another year," said the troll.



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"I have, indeed," said the boy. "Life isn't all beer and skittles whether you're man or mouse."

"Very well," said the troll. "Now it is time to feed the animals again, and though they have not been fed for a year and are powerfully hungry, still you must finish the task in a day."

"I will do what I can," answered the lad. Then he went to the stables which were now two miles underground and two miles long, and he worked with might and main feeding the deer and the bears and the wolves and the hares, and by night all the work was done.

"Well," said the troll, "I don't see how you did it, but as long as it's done, you deserve a good supper and a good night's rest, so take them and welcome to them."

The boy ate well and slept well, and in the morning the troll said, "The animals are not to be fed today, for you did extra well by them yesterday, and there's no need to spoil them. Now you may play and do as you please till it's time to work again."

"Thank you," said the lad. "That will be fine, indeed."

But before he could leave, the troll had him by

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the collar and cried,

*"Mumble, jumble, turn and tumble,
Be a bird and do not fumble,"*

and there and then the boy became a raven, and away he flew into the air.

"This will be ever so much better than being a hare," said the boy. "I can fly fast and far, and I'll see a good bit of the world."

But things were little better really, for no sooner did he show himself on the edge of the forest than the hunters were after him with their guns, and he had to stay well hidden in the trees. The time went by, however, and when a year and a day were up, the troll called the lad home again.

*"Mumble, jumble, turn and tumble,
Be a boy and do not fumble,"*

said the troll, and in a moment the boy was himself again.

"Well," said the troll, "now that you're back safe and sound, how did you like the life of a raven?"

"Quite nicely, thank you," said the lad. "I could never have flown through the air if I had been a

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mere boy."

"But of course you're not willing to stay another year," said the troll.

"Yes, indeed, I am," replied the lad. "Money doesn't come easy, and I may as well earn it serving you as another."

"Very well," said the troll. "Now you must feed the animals again, and though they have not been fed for a year and are powerfully hungry, still you must finish the task in a day."

"I will do what I can," said the lad. Then he went to the barns which were now three miles underground and three miles long, and he worked with might and main feeding the deer and the bears and the wolves and the hares, and by night all the work was done.

"Well," said the troll, "I don't see how you did it, but as long as it's done, you deserve a good supper and a good night's rest, so take them and welcome to them."

The lad ate well and slept well, and in the morning the troll said, "You are not to feed the animals today for they're still full from yesterday, and there's no need to stuff them. Now you may play and roam about at will."

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"Thank you," said the lad. "That will be fine, indeed."

But before he could turn round, the troll caught him by the collar and cried,

*"Mumble, jumble, turn and tumble,
Be a fish and do not fumble,"*

and there and then the boy was changed into a herring, and giving a great leap, he jumped into a nearby stream.

"This will be great sport," thought the boy. "I'll swim all day from morning till night."

But it was scarcely any sport at all, for he was the only fish that had been in the water for years, and at sight of him, the fishermen took out their lines and nets and tried to catch him. But they had no luck, for with his quick fins and his clever head, he managed to keep out of their reach, and presently he left the stream and swam down to the sea.

He swam far out, and there he came to a beautiful glass castle that rested on the bottom of the sea. The rooms were made of white whalebone inlaid with gold and pearls, the floors were covered with soft moss, and the windows were hung with

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delicate seaweed. In a courtyard grew tiny shell-flowers and tall shell-trees, and a little fountain flowed up from a snail's shell and fell down on little bells of coral, making lovely tinkling music that filled the whole castle and all the ocean round it.

But the loveliest sight of all was a young girl dressed in robes of rainbow silk and wearing a crown on her long yellow hair. She went from room to room among the beautiful furnishings, her silken robes flowing behind her like sparkling water, and the boy had never seen anything so beautiful in all his days.

The girl seemed lonely, however, for there was no one else in the castle, and as she walked about, she stopped often to gaze into one of the many mirrors that hung from ceiling to floor, or to look out through the castle's glass walls and into the ocean beyond.

"Well," said the lad as he swam round and round admiring her, "I think the princess would like a little company, and if I were only a man instead of a fish, I could go in and pay her a call. But perhaps I can think of the troll's words and make myself a boy again." Then he thought

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hard, and in a moment the troll's words came to him.

*"Mumble, jumble, turn and tumble,
Be a boy and do not fumble,"*

he cried, and in a trice he was his own self and went hurrying into the castle and straight up to the young princess.

He gave her a greeting, and this frightened her quite out of her wits, for she hadn't seen a soul in ever so long. But she soon recovered, and when the lad told her his story, she was most happy to see him. They played together all day long, building little houses of shells, and looking for pearls, and making music on the coral bells. And in the evening the princess cooked dumplings and tarts for the lad, and he slept on a bed of moss, and was lulled to sleep by the sound of the sea.

In this way the time quickly passed, and when a year and a day were almost up, the princess said to the boy, "It is time for you to leave me, so turn back into a fish again and be ready to answer the troll's call."

"But I do not wish to leave you," said the lad.

"Nor do I wish to have you go," said the prin-

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cess, "but go you must, for my father, you see, is the troll whom you serve, and if he should catch you here, there would be trouble indeed. He has hidden me under the water so that no one can find me and take me away from him, and if he saw you here, he would chop off your head at once."

"The troll is cruel and selfish," said the lad.

"Alas, that is true," said the princess. "But don't be downcast, dear lad, for I think I have found a way to trick my father and bring us together again."

"Then let me hear it at once," said the lad.

"Well," said the princess, "the king who lives next to my father is in debt to him, and as he cannot pay in a month and a day, he will lose his head when the time is up."

"That is indeed sad," said the boy.

"But you can help him, and thus help us, too," said the princess. "Now what you must do is to leave my father, taking with you the six bushels of money which are due you, and go straight to the next kingdom. There you must enter the service of the king, and when a month and a day are up, and the king is moaning and groaning and ready to lose his head, then you must tell him you know

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what is troubling him, and you must offer to lend him the money on condition that you may go with him dressed as a fool in cap and bells.

"This the king will be glad to allow, and when you are on your way, you must caper about with all kinds of nonsense and tomfoolery, and upon reaching my father's palace, you must be ever so careless, rattling doors, and breaking windows and furniture. This will anger my father no end, and since the king must be responsible for any damage his fool does, my father will demand that the king answer four questions or lose his life.

"The first question will be, 'Where dwells my fair daughter?' But the king, of course, will have no answer, and then you must come forth and say, 'Your daughter dwells far, far away on the bottom of the sea.'

"That will be true, and then my father will ask, 'Would you know my daughter if you saw her?' and you must say, 'I would know her in the dark with my eyes closed tight.'

"Then my father will bring forth a thousand and one maidens and you will have to choose the one that is I. But as we will all look alike you can never choose the right one in a million years, so

THE TROLL'S DAUGHTER

I will have to help you a bit. I will touch you as I walk by, and then you can seize me and shout, 'Here is your daughter.'

"This will take care of the second question, and the third question will be, 'Where has my heart been hidden?' To this you must say, 'Your heart is hidden in a fish,' and then my father will ask, 'Would you know that fish if you saw it?' and you must answer, 'I would know that fish in the dark with my eyes shut tight.'

"At this my father will command a thousand and one fish to come forth and you will have to choose the one that holds his heart. But as they will all look alike, you can never choose the right one in a million years, so I will have to help you. I shall be by your side, and when my father's fish goes by, I will give you a little shove, and you can catch it and cut it open. That will finish the troll, and then we'll be free to do as we please."

"You are a wonderfully clever princess," said the lad.

"Not more clever than you," said the princess. "But hurry now, and change into a fish again, for there's no time to lose."

The lad did as she bid, and in a flash he was a her-

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ring again and went swimming back into the sea.

Soon after, the troll called him home again and saying,

*"Mumble, jumble, turn and tumble,
Be a boy and do not fumble,"*

turned him into his own shape once more.

"Well," said the troll, "now that you're back safe and sound, how did you like being a fish?"

"I liked it best of all," said the lad. "The ocean is full of interesting things."

"Then of course you'll be glad to serve me another year," said the troll. "You will earn six bushels of money and be worth twelve."

"I do not care to stay longer," said the lad, "so I'll take my first six bushels and be on my way."

To this the troll had to agree, for a bargain is a bargain, even with trolls. The boy received his money, and with half of it tied in front and half of it tied behind, he started on his way.

After a time he came to the next kingdom, and when he had safely hidden his money, he sought service with the king.

"Well," said the king, "I need a lad to look after the stables. But truth to tell, it's not much I can

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pay you."

"It's only food and a bed I want," said the lad, and so the king gave him a place, and he worked hard in the stables but kept an eye on the king, too, and saw as the days went by, how sad and forlorn he looked.

Then when a month and a day were almost up, he went to the king and said, "You need not grieve, good king, for I know what's troubling you, and I promise to help you."

"But that is impossible," said the king. "I need six bushels of gold."

"That is just the amount I have," said the boy. "Now, in return for lending you the money, you must let me dress as your court jester and run along before you, and you must let me get into any mischief I please and not worry about it, for I give you my word that I'll be sure to save us both."

"Very well," replied the king, and the boy gave him the money, and then they made ready to go, the king wearing his best bib and tucker and the boy dressed in cap and bells.

After a goodly trip, they came to the troll's house, which now stood high above the ground and looked as splendid as a king's castle. It was

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made of the finest glass, and just the touch of a finger was enough to break it. At sight of it, the boy sped ahead as fast as he could, and bumped into windows and doors, and smashed everything at a merry rate.

But the troll soon heard him and came rushing out and caught him by the heels.

"What is the meaning of all this?" he cried to the king. "You can't pay your old debts, and yet you allow your fool to make new ones! Well, we'll soon have your head for such nonsense."

"But I am quite able to pay my first debt," said the king, and he brought forth the six bushels of gold. The troll couldn't believe his eyes and measured the gold to the last ounce. It was all there, however, every penny's worth, and the troll couldn't find the least fault with it.

But there was still the damage the fool had done. He had ruined the troll's beautiful castle, and that was something not even money could pay for.

"It can only be repaid by answering four questions," said the troll, "and that, of course, you cannot do."

"His Majesty will be glad to try," said the lad, "and I'll do what I can, too." Then he placed him-

THE TROLL'S DAUGHTER

self beside the king, and the troll cried, "Where dwells my fair daughter?"

"Your daughter dwells far, far away on the bottom of the sea," spoke up the boy.

"Would you know her if you saw her?" then asked the troll.

"Indeed I would," said the boy. "I would know her in the dark with my eyes closed tight. Bring her here at once."

Then the troll raised his hand, and suddenly the room was filled with beautiful, golden-haired maidens, and they passed one by one before the boy. But they all looked alike, and which was the princess he could not tell, till all at once, one of them touched him. Then he knew she was the real princess, and he caught her round the waist and cried, "Here is your daughter, Master Troll."

The troll howled, and all the other maidens disappeared into thin air, and then the lad said, "Now let us try the third question."

"You may try it, but you'll never guess it," cried the troll. "Where has my heart been hidden? That is the question."

"That's easily answered," said the lad. "Your heart is hidden in a fish, Master Troll."

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"Would you know that fish if you saw it?" cried the troll.

"Indeed I would," said the lad. "I would know it in the dark with my eyes shut tight. Bring it here at once."

The troll raised his hand and the room was full of swimming fish. But they all looked alike, alas, and which one had the troll's heart, the boy could not say, till suddenly the princess squeezed his arm. Then he knew that the fish now swimming by was the one he wanted, and he reached out quickly and seized it. He cut it open, and at that moment the troll fell dead and burst into a million pieces of flint that scattered up and down the countryside and can be seen there to this day.

Then the mountain split open, and all the birds and animals that had been enchanted came out and went to live in the forest once more. The lovely glass castle rose out of the sea and settled down on the edge of the forest, and the princess and the lad were married. All the kings from ever so many kingdoms came to see them, and the common people as well. They had a great feast, and then they found all the troll's money and spent it, and they lived happily ever after.



THE SEVEN STARS

THERE was once a man who had six sons, and as he could not find names for so many boys, he called them all according to age, Oldest, Next Oldest, Third Oldest, Third Youngest, Next Youngest, and Youngest.

When they were all grown boys, the father called them together and said, "Now, my sons, it's high time you learned to do something besides eating and sleeping and playing in between. You must go out in the world, and each learn a trade, and

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grow up to be men of some account."

The boys did not entirely agree with their father, but as they had to earn their living sooner or later, they decided that now was as good a time as ever, and so early the next morning they took up their knapsacks and started on their way, going together till they came to a spot where three roads crossed, making six directions in all.

"Well," said Oldest, "which way shall we go?"

"Let us go north," said Youngest.

"No, let us go south," said Next Youngest.

Next Oldest had still another idea, and so did all the others. Each wanted to go a different way, and they could come to no agreement.

"Well," said Oldest at last, "let each go his own way, for there are six roads, making enough for all. But at the end of a year and a day, let us all meet here, and return home to our father together, and tell him how we have made out in the world."

This suited them all quite well, so they bid each other farewell and went their separate ways. And when a year and a day had gone by, they met again at the crossroads, and home they returned to report to their father.

"Well," said the father, "it's good to see you

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home hale and hearty. Now let me hear what you have done for a living. You have all fared well, I trust."

"I have done very well," said Oldest. "I have learned to build ships that will go by themselves and need no wind to move them."

"That is indeed remarkable," said his father.

"I have done well, too," said Next Oldest. "I have been to sea, and I know how to steer the biggest and fastest ship that ever floated. I can steer it over water, and over land as well."

"How remarkable," said his father.

"I haven't done badly myself," said Third Oldest. "I have learned to listen well and I can hear what goes on in all the kingdoms around."

"You are indeed clever," said his father.

"I've done as well as any," said Third Youngest. "I have become a fine marksman. I'm so fine, in fact, that I can hit a pinhead a mile away."

"I do declare I never heard of such cleverness," said the father.

"I've been clever, too," said Next Youngest. "I have learned to climb extremely well. There isn't a mountain in the world that I cannot scale, and I can go up the side of a wall like a fly."

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"I never heard the likes," said his father.

"I'm no ordinary fellow either," said Youngest. "I have become a master thief, and no one in the world can steal so well as I."

"You have all learned to do marvelous things, there's no doubt about that," said the father. "But I don't see how they'll earn you ordinary bread and butter. Why should a ship go by itself, Oldest, my lad, when there's plenty of wind to fill the sails and plenty of hands to pull the oars, and why should a ship go over land, Next Oldest, when there's plenty of space for it on the sea? And Third Oldest, why should you hear what goes on in the next kingdom when there's talk enough to be heard in our own? And you, Third Youngest, why should you shoot at a pin when there's a tasty hare to be caught? And Next Youngest, why should you climb a wall like a fly when there's plenty of good level land to keep your feet busy? And you, Youngest, why should you be a master thief when the world's full of good honest toil to be done?"

"Oh, there'll be a time and a place for all of our talents," said Oldest. "Don't you worry about that, good father."

And indeed he was right, for it happened soon

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after that the king's beautiful young daughter was captured by a troll, and the king promised that whoever could rescue her should have her for his wife and half the kingdom for a wedding present. The six brothers decided that this was just the deed for them to do, and so the shipbuilder made a ship that would run by itself. Then they went on board, and the steersman guided the ship over land and sea.

The listener listened with all his might, and at length he heard the princess crying inside a glass mountain at the far end of the world. They sailed on to the mountain, and the climber climbed straight up to the top and looked inside where he saw the lovely princess and the ugly troll. The troll was sleeping with his head in the princess's lap, and she was wiping her tears with her long golden hair.

"Well," said the climber, "I can get to the princess easily enough, but I can't steal her away without waking the troll. I must have my brother for that." Then down he went, and taking the master thief on his back, climbed up again and straight into the heart of the mountain. The master thief stole the princess away from the sleeping troll, the

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climber ran down the hill with them, and they all hurried on board the waiting ship and sailed away.

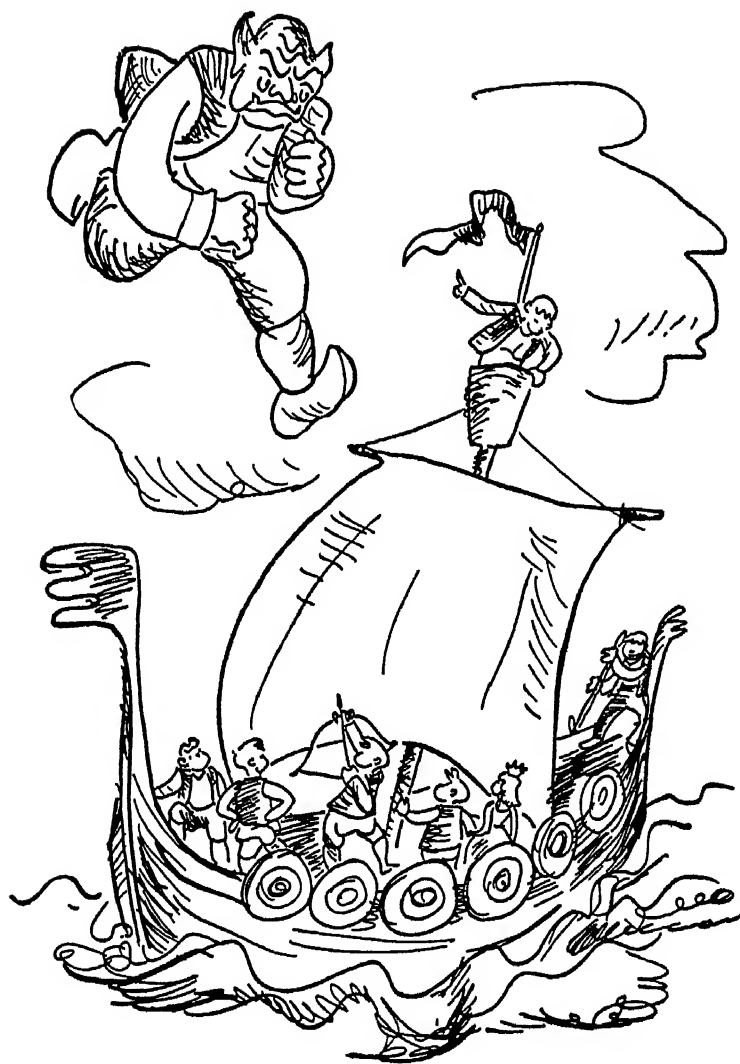
Now all this while, the listener listened for the troll, and when they had gone some distance, he cried to the others, "Listen now, the troll is awakening! Listen now, he is stretching himself. Listen now, he misses the princess! And listen now, he's up, and he's coming after us."

"Oh, dear," cried the princess, "he'll soon be upon us, and he'll kill us every one. He can go through the air like the wind, and we'll never escape him. Oh, if only we had a good marksman among us."

"I am a marksman," said Next Youngest. "Quick, what can I do?"

"The troll cannot be harmed except in one little place," said the princess, "and that is a tiny black spot that lies over his heart and is no bigger than a pinhead. If you can hit it, we will be saved."

Just then the troll came rushing through the air, but the marksman was ready for him. He aimed carefully and hit the very center of the black spot, and the troll burst into a thousand pieces, all flint and sharp as nails, and that was the end of him. Then the six brothers sailed gaily home and took the



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lovely princess to her father's castle. The king rejoiced to see her, but at sight of all the brothers, he was in a great stew, for he couldn't tell which was to have the princess.

"I don't know what's to be done," he said at last. "Perhaps you, dear princess, had best make your own choice."

But the princess could do no better than her father, for as the boys had all shared alike in her rescue, she liked them all equally well.

"I don't know what's to be done either," she said at last. "Perhaps the brothers should decide among themselves."

But the brothers could do nothing of the sort, for they all liked the princess equally well, and besides, none wished to be separated from the others. Finally a good fairy came to their rescue. She turned them all into stars and set the seven of them high in the sky, where they could never be separated and where you can see them to this day. The one of the seven that shines the brightest is the princess, and the dimmest of them all is the master thief.



THE PRINCESS WITH THE GOLDEN SHOES

THERE was once a young man with a big heart and a small purse who went out into the world to seek his fortune. He had not gone far, however, when he met an old man with a staff in his hand.

"Good day, young fellow," said the old one.
"Have you a penny to spare me?"

"Alas," said the young man, "I have no money,

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but I'll gladly share my food with you."

"Thank you, lad," said the old man. "Food I can use as well as money, so I'll take what you can give me."

They sat down under a tree and the young man shared his food with the old fellow. When they had finished eating, the old man said, "Since you have shared with me, I will share with you. I will give you this stick and this ball, and they will be sure to bring you luck. When you hold the stick in front of you, you'll become invisible, and when you strike the ball with the stick, it will roll before you and show you what road to take."

"I thank you kindly for such fine gifts," said the young man, and then he struck the ball with the staff, and the ball rolled quickly before him, and kept on rolling till he came to a large town.

Outside the town wall sat many sad-faced young men.

"Well," said the lad, "why such long faces?"

"It's a long, sad story," said the young men, "and if you don't want to join us, you'd best not step inside the gates."

"First let me hear the story," said the young man.

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"In the city lies the castle of the king," said the sad ones, "and the king has a fair daughter and all the wealth in the world. But she's a strange one, this princess, for every night she wears out twelve pairs of golden slippers, and neither the king, nor the queen, nor anyone else can tell how it happens."

"That is strange indeed," said the young man.

"It provokes the king no end," said the sad ones, "for she's sure to dance herself to skin and bones, and who wants a skinny princess?"

"Who, indeed!" exclaimed the lad.

"Now," said the sad ones, "the king has proclaimed that anyone who can solve this riddle may have the princess for his bride, and the king's money besides, and as the princess is fair, and the king's money worth much, many men have tried. But all have failed, alas, and here we sit, banished forever from the city."

"That is dreadful indeed," said the lad. "But surely someone can find the answer, and perhaps I'm the lad to do it. Well, we'll see what the little ball says." Then he struck the ball again, and straight through the city it ran and up to the king's palace.

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"I have come to solve the riddle of the prince and her golden slippers," said the lad to the king.

"But it is a riddle, alas, that cannot be solved," said the king. "The cleverest princes have tried and failed."

"Well," said the lad, "it costs nothing to let me try, so give your permission at once, and if I fail, then you can hang me from the nearest tree."

"Very well," said the king. "Since you insist, we'll give you a trial. For three nights you may keep watch on the princess when she goes to bed. We'll give you a cot in the princess's chamber, and you can pretend to be asleep, but you must stay wide awake, for 't is in the middle of the night that the riddle takes place. If you can see what happens then you will have solved the riddle, but if you see nothing, then you'll have failed, and I will hold you to your word and hang you from the nearest tree."

The young man was satisfied with this, for in sight of the king's fine palace, he had decided that if he couldn't live like a king there was little use to live at all, and that very evening the trial began.

The boy was given a bed near the princess, and with his staff and his ball beside him, and one eye open and one eye closed, he lay down to watch wha

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the princess would do. But she did nothing at all, and after a time the lad forgot to watch and fell fast asleep and did not awaken till it was broad daylight.

"Well," said the king, "I see you've done no better for all my threats and all your promises."

"But I'll do much better tonight," said the boy, and he really meant to keep his promise, so when he went to bed that evening with his staff and his ball beside him, he propped his eyes open with his little fingers, and thus kept awake for a long, long time. But nothing happened to the princess, and after a while his fingers gave way, and then he fell fast asleep, and when he awakened it was broad daylight again.

"Well," said the king, "you've done no better the second night than the first, so you'd best say your prayers and set your things in order, for you're sure to be hanged tomorrow."

"Oh, I'll do much better tonight, I promise faithfully," said the lad. And this time when he went to bed with his staff and his ball beside him, he pretended to fall asleep at once, keeping his eyes closed tight. But he pinched himself to make sure he kept awake, and it wasn't long before he



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heard voices, and opening one eye a tiny bit, he saw a strange woman talking to the princess.

"Does the boy sleep soundly?" asked the woman.

"Yes, indeed," answered the princess. "He's a real sleepyhead."

"But I must test him to make sure," said the woman, and she drew out a gold needle and stuck it into one of his feet. He lay still as a statue, and so she was satisfied, and turned away from the boy, leaving the needle where it lay. Then she and the princess moved the princess's bed, and there in the side of the wall was a tiny staircase down which they quickly descended.

The boy as quickly arose, put the needle in his knapsack, held his staff before him to make himself invisible, and ran down the stairs after them. They walked till they came to a wood where everything was silver—the trees, the flowers, and even the grass. They walked through the wood, and when they came to the end of it, the lad broke off a bough of a tree and put it in his knapsack.

The princess heard the crackling of the bough as it broke, and she looked quickly round but could see no one. "I fear someone is following us, but I don't see a soul," she said to the strange woman

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beside her.

"It is only the wind, so have no fear," answered the woman.

Then on they went till they came to a wood where everything was gold—the trees, the flowers, and even the grass. And through this they walked till they reached the end, and then the boy broke off a golden bough and put it in his knapsack. The princess heard the crackling and turned quickly round but could see no one.

"I fear someone is following us, but I don't see a soul," she said.

"It is only the wind," said the woman, "so have no fear."

Then on they went and came soon to a wood where everything was covered with diamonds—the trees, the flowers, and even the grass. And when they reached the end of the diamond wood, the boy again broke off a bough and put it in his knapsack with the silver and the golden boughs.

They now reached a lake, and there lay a little boat in which the princess and the woman seated themselves. The boy jumped in beside them before they could shove off, and the boat rocked violently.

"What is that?" cried the princess. "Now I am

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sure someone is with us though I can't see a soul."

"Oh, it is only the wind," said the woman, "so you need have no fear."

Then they set sail and crossed to the other side where a fine castle stood close to the water's edge. A big troll came out of the castle, took the princess round the waist and cried to her, "Why have you come so late, princess mine?"

"I had a great fear that someone was following us," said the princess.

"But 't was only the wind," said the woman beside them.

"Of course 't was only the wind," said the troll and hurried the princess into the palace.

"We must feast at once so as to be about our dancing," he said, and he seated the princess at a table covered with gold and silver dishes, and heaped high with good things to eat. The invisible lad stood behind the princess's chair, and when she had finished eating, he took her gold knife and fork and her silver plate and cup and put them in the knapsack.

"Look," cried the princess, "my dishes are gone. There is indeed someone here."

"'T is only the servants, so have no fear," said

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the troll. "They are quick and quiet trolls, those servants of mine."

Then he took the princess round the waist, and hurried her into the ballroom to dance. They danced twelve dances, swinging about till they were breathless, and with each dance, the princess wore out a pair of golden slippers. She tossed them into a corner, and when the last dance was over, the boy picked them all up and tucked them away in his knapsack.

The troll now returned the princess to the boat, and when she climbed in, the young man climbed in beside her and sat close to her till they reached home. Then he jumped quickly ashore and ran ahead to the palace so as to be in bed and pretend to be sleeping when the princess arrived.

"Well, sleep away, sleepyhead," said the princess when she saw him. "Neither you nor anyone else in the kingdom will ever guess my secret." Then she climbed back into bed herself and waited for the king to arrive and send the boy to be hanged.

The king came shortly after and was sorely disappointed at the lad's seeming failure. "You were a likely lad," he said, "and it's a sad day for me that you must hang."

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"But it's a glad day for me," said the princess, and she insisted on going to see the young man hanged, taking the whole court with her.

"But before you hang me," said the young man, "I must tell you of a curious dream I had last night. I dreamed that a strange woman came into the room where I watched the princess, and the strange woman said, 'Does the boy sleep soundly?' and the princess answered, 'Yes, indeed, he's a real sleepy-head.' But the woman wanted to make sure, and so she stuck me with a golden needle, and I do believe that this is the very needle she used." And he took the needle from out his knapsack and handed it to the king.

"Now," continued the lad, "I also dreamed that the woman and the princess pushed the princess's bed aside and went down a tiny stairway, and down I went after them. We walked till we came to a silver wood, and at the end of the wood, I broke off a bough, and I do believe this is the very one." And he took out the silver bough and handed it to the king.

"This is strange, very strange," said the king.

"Shall I tell more?" asked the lad.

"By all means, no," cried the princess.

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"By all means, yes," cried the king.

"Well," said the lad, "I dreamed we came to a golden wood, and when we had reached the end, I broke off a bough, and I do believe this is the very one." And he took out the golden bough and handed it to the king.

"Next," said the lad, "we came to a diamond wood, and when we had reached the end, I broke off a bough, and I do believe this is the very one." And he took out the diamond bough and gave it to the king.

"This is remarkable, very remarkable," cried the king.

"Shall I go on?" asked the lad.

"Do so, indeed," said the king.

"No, stop, stop!" cried the princess.

But the lad went on. "I dreamed we came to a lake where a little boat lay dancing on the water," he said. "The princess and the woman jumped into the boat, and I jumped in after them. Then away we sailed across the lake till we reached a fine castle. Here the princess was greeted by a big troll who took her into the castle to feast at a table set with gold and silver dishes, and I do believe these are the very ones from which she ate." And

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he took out the gold knife and fork and the silver plate and cup and gave them to the king.

"Now," said the lad, "when the feast was over, the troll whisked the princess into the ballroom. They danced twelve dances, and with each one, the princess wore out a pair of golden slippers which she threw into a corner, and I do believe I have every one of them here." Then he took the slippers out of his knapsack and gave them to the king.

"A thousand thanks," cried the king. "You have indeed solved the riddle and saved the princess."

Then he waved his crown in the air and shouted for joy. But the princess wept a gallon of tears, and she could not think for the life of her how the boy had been so clever as to guess her secret.

"Dry your tears," said the king, "and you and this fine lad can be married at once."

But the princess cried no, for she was still under the troll's enchantment and wanted that ugly old fellow and none other. The lad said no, too, for his work was not finished.

"I must first visit the troll," he said, "and if I may have the princess's golden thimble to match the golden needle, then I will be on my way."

The princess would not, herself, give up the

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thimble, but the servants were sent to fetch it, and when they had returned with it, the lad went on his way. He passed through the wood of silver, and then the one of gold, and then the one of diamonds, and came at length to the lake with the little boat. He climbed into the boat and sailed across to the troll's castle.

The troll came running out. "How dare you cross to the troll king's castle?" he cried. "Now begone at once or you'll sadly rue it."

"But first I must finish my task," said the lad, and he stuck the gold needle into the troll's heart and held the gold thimble underneath. Three drops of blood fell into the thimble, and then the fearful troll died.

"Well, there's good riddance of bad rubbish," said the lad, and then he returned to the boat and sailed back to the other side, where he quickly landed the boat and started for home. Soon he came to the diamond wood, and here he dropped one drop of blood upon the ground, and all at once the trees and flowers and grass turned into just as many men and women and children.

"We thank you a thousand times for breaking our enchantment," they cried, and they all trooped

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after him, and begged him to be their king.

"Well," said the lad, "I don't mind being king at all, but I'd best see first what the princess says."

Soon they came to the golden wood, and here the boy poured out the second drop of blood, and here, too, the trees and flowers and grass all turned into men and women and children, a whole kingdom of them.

"We thank you a thousand times for breaking our enchantment," they cried, and they all trooped after him and begged him to be their king.

"Well," said the lad, "I don't mind being king at all, but I'd best see first what the princess says," and on they went till they came to the silver wood.

Here the lad poured out the last drop of blood, and the whole wood turned into people, a big kingdom of them.

"We thank you a thousand times for breaking our enchantment," they cried, and they all trooped after him and begged him to be their king.

"Well," said the lad, "I don't mind being king at all, but I'd best see first what the princess says," and on they went till they reached the castle.

There the king and the princess were waiting for the lad, and the princess threw her arms about

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him and loved him dearly, for of course she, too, had been freed from the enchantment.

"Now," said the king, "we'll have the wedding at once, and the princess will be yours, and half the kingdom, too."

"But we want him for our king," said the first kingdom of people, and likewise the second and third, and it was up to the princess to say yea or nay.

And yea she said in very short order, though one crown is heavy and four that much more, and so she and the lad were married amidst feasting and merriment enough to last a lifetime. They became king and queen of all four kingdoms, and if they haven't died yet, why, they're king and queen still.



THE FRUITS OF HEALTH

ONCE upon a time there was a farmer who had three young sons and one small farm. On the farm was an apple orchard, and in the orchard stood a tree with magic fruit that could cure every ache and pain in the world. But which tree it was, alas, the farmer would not say, and so when he

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died, his sons knew as little about it as you, or I, or the man in the moon.

They were to share the orchard, however, share it fair and square, and so they set about dividing it into three equal parts, one for the oldest, one for the middle, and one for the youngest of all. Then the oldest and the one between decided their parts were much too small, and so they divided again, and this time there was half for the oldest, half for the next one, and only a single, sad little tree for the youngest of all. And with this the poor lad had to be satisfied, for his brothers were bigger and stronger than he, and had they wished, they could have made mincemeat out of him in no time at all.

Now it so happened that the king of the country where the brothers lived had an only daughter who was fair as she was good and good as she was fair. But one day she fell ill, whether from too many strawberry tarts or too much taffy and cream, no one could say, and not a soul in the land was able to cure her.

"Alas!" cried the king. "This will never do. A princess who can't eat such royal dainties as strawberry tarts and taffy and cream is really no prin-

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cess at all," and so he proclaimed throughout the land that whoever could make the princess well again should have all the good things he could eat for the rest of his days, and should have the princess for a wife and half the kingdom besides.

"Well," said the two brothers when they heard this news, "we are just the fellows to put the princess on her feet again, for one of us has the tree of health and can't help but cure her. We must each take her a basket of fruit, and the one that wins shall be king, and the other one can manage the palace and keep an eye on the money bags."

The oldest brother had the first chance. He took a pretty basket, filled it with the roundest and reddest apples he could find in his half of the orchard, and was off for the palace.

His way led through a forest, and right in the middle of it, he met a little old woman with a shawl on her head and a staff in her hand.

"Good morrow, good lad," she said, "and pray tell, what's in your basket?"

"It's little business of yours," said the lad, "but I'll tell you this once. It's jumping frogs and hopping toads."

"So let it be," said the old woman, and there and

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then they separated, and the boy went on to the palace.

At the gate he was stopped by the guards. "Where are you bound and what do you carry?" asked the guards.

"I have come to cure the princess," said the boy, "and I carry fruits of health."

"That is good news," said the guards. "Open the basket for all to see and then you may enter."

The lad opened the basket, but there wasn't a bit of fruit to be seen. The basket was full of hopping toads and jumping frogs, and they all leaped out at the guards and frightened them half to death.

"Fruits of health indeed!" they cried, and they beat the boy within an inch of his life, then threw his basket over his head and sent him limping back home again.

"Well," said the second brother, "'t is plain to be seen that I'm the one who has the real fruits of health, so I will go to the palace and cure the princess, and I'll be the one to marry her, and my brother will have to be content with running the palace and keeping an eye on the money bags."

Then he took a fancy basket, filled it with the

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roundest and reddest apples he could find in his half of the orchard, and set out for the palace.

His way led through a forest, too, and right in the middle of it, he met a little old woman with a shawl on her head and a staff in her hand.

"Good morrow, good lad," she said, "and pray tell, what's in your basket?"

"It's little business of yours," said the lad, "but I'll tell you this once. It's sticks and stones to break your bones."

"So let it be," said the old woman, and with that they parted, and the boy ran on to the palace.

At the gate he was stopped by the guards. "Where are you bound and what do you carry?" asked the guards.

"I have come to cure the princess," said the lad, "and I carry fruits of health."

"That is good news," said the guards. "Open the basket for all to see and then you may enter."

The boy opened the basket, but not a bit of fruit was to be seen. The basket was full of sticks and stones, and they all jumped out at the guards and frightened them half to death.

"Fruits of health, indeed!" they cried, and they beat the boy within an inch of his life, then threw

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the basket over his head and sent him limping back home again.

The youngest brother now decided to try his luck, for though he had only one little tree, still the fruit was good to look at and good to eat, and who knew if it might not be magic besides. Without saying a word to the unlucky older boys, he picked a little basketful and started on his way.

The road led through a forest, and right in the middle of it, the boy met a little old woman with a shawl on her head and a staff in her hand.

"Good morrow, good lad," said the old woman, "and pray tell, what's in your basket?"

"It's fruit to cure the princess," said the boy.

"So let it be," said the old woman, and with that they parted, and the lad went on his way again.

When he reached the end of the forest, he came to a lake, and there on the shore he saw a fish washed up by the waves. It lay gasping on the dry land and would soon be dead.

"Well," said the lad, "I'm in a hurry, but still I've time to help a poor creature," and he put down his basket, picked up the fish, and put it in the water again.

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Then, as he started on his way, the fish called out to him,

*"Thank you, lad, for your good deed,
And think of me when you're in need."*

"That I will," said the lad, and on he went till he came to a raven and a swarm of bees. The raven was flying from the east and the bees from the west, and both wanted to go straight ahead, but neither would let the other pass. There was a dreadful sticking and stabbing, and all were likely to fall down stone dead.

"Well," said the lad, "I'm in a hurry, but hurry or not, I'll help a poor creature. Now, you, raven, fly over the trees, and you, bees, fly down by the flowers," and they all did just as he told them and were soon out of each other's way.

Then, as the lad was on his way again, they called out,

*"Thank you, lad, for your good deed,
And think of us when you're in need."*

"That I will," said the lad, and on he went.

At last he reached the palace gate, and the guards stopped him and said, "Where are you

bound, and what do you carry?"

"I have come to cure the princess, and I carry the fruits of health," said the lad.

"That is good news," replied the guards. "Open the basket for all to see and then you may enter."

The lad opened the basket, and there lay the most beautiful apples ever seen in the whole wide world.

"You may enter at once," said the guards, and in the lad went and straight to the princess's bedroom. There she lay on a couch so ill and weak she could scarcely lift a finger, and the poor king sat beside her looking not much better himself.

"I have come to help the princess," said the lad. "If she will eat these apples, she'll soon be well again."

"That is good news," said the king, and he picked out the biggest ones he could find, and gave them to the princess. She began to eat them at once, and at once she began to get well. When she had eaten the first one, she could lift her head from the pillow, with the second one she was able to sit up, and when she had finished the third, she was so hale and hearty that she jumped up and danced a jig right in the middle of her bed. She had never felt so



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well in all her born days.

The king was overjoyed, and the boy went up to the princess and said, "Now I claim my reward."

"Yes, indeed," said the king. "You have cured her, so now you may marry her, and we'll have the wedding tomorrow."

But the princess had something to say to this. "A country bumpkin with nothing to his name but a basket of apples is no husband for a princess," she said. "I cannot marry you until you bring me the ring with which my father was married, and that was lost in the lake more than twenty years ago."

"That is nothing at all," said the lad. "That's as easy as chewing butter," and down he went to the lake and called out,

*"Little fish, little fish, give me heed,
I'm calling to you in my hour of need."*

In a moment the fish swam up to the edge of the lake. "What is your need?" it asked.

"I must find the golden ring which the king lost long ago."

"That we shall do in a moment or two," said the fish, and down it dived, and soon came up

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with the ring in its mouth.

"I thank you most kindly," said the lad, and taking the ring he went back to the palace.

"You are truly a clever lad," said the king. "Now we shall celebrate the marriage at once."

"But where shall we live?" cried the princess. "The man I marry must give me a castle as fine as my father's and finer still. It must have towers as high as the sky, and it must shine like pure gold."

"That is nothing at all," said the lad. "That's as easy as eating pie," and out he went to the bees and called,

*"Little bees, come from far and wide,
Bring your help now to my side."*

In a moment a whole hive of bees came swarming and buzzing around him.

"What help do you need?" asked the bees.

"I must build a castle that reaches the sky and shines like pure gold."

"Go home at once and have no fear," said the bees, "for come morn there'll be a fine castle here."

"I thank you most kindly," said the lad, and in the morning when he came back, there stood the most beautiful castle of wax you could ever im-

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agine. The towers reached to the top of the sky and gleamed and glittered like the purest gold.

The king was so pleased he kicked up his heels like a schoolboy. "We'll celebrate the marriage at once," he cried. "We've a ring and a house and a good man, and what more could even a princess want!"

"But how shall we keep warm?" asked the princess. "We've no flaming brands to light the logs. The man I marry must fetch us some burning coals from the troll king's castle. Then the fires will never burn low and never go out."

"That is nothing at all," said the lad. "That's as easy as drinking duck soup," and out he sped to the raven and called,

*"Raven, raven, come with speed,
Help me in this time of need."*

The raven flew up at once and asked, "What is your need, my lad?"

"I must get a burning brand from the troll king's castle," said the boy.

"That we can do in no time at all," said the raven, and off it flew and soon returned with the burning brand.

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"I thank you most kindly," said the lad, and away he went back to the castle.

There he threw the burning brand down before the princess, and the sparks and smoke leaped up so high she was frightened half out of her wits. She jumped straight into the lad's arms, and he wouldn't let her go, so there and then they were married, and they feasted on tarts and taffy and lived happily ever after.



LOST AND FOUND

ONCE upon a time there lived a poor wood-cutter who had many mouths to feed and very little to give them. He worked hard and hoped for better luck, however, and one day as he was coming from the woods with a heavy bundle of sticks, whom should he meet but a fine-faced stranger weighed down with bags of gold.

"That's a heavy load you're carrying," said the stranger.

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"It's many a mouth I have at home to feed," said the poor man. "Wood comes cheap but bread comes high."

"Perhaps I can help you," said the stranger. "I'll give you all the gold you can use and more if you will make a bargain with me."

"What is your bargain?" asked the woodcutter.

"Promise me that after ten years plus five, I may have whatever meets you first as you arrive home today."

Now it was his little old dog that the woodcutter always met first, and though he loved the faithful creature, he loved a bit of gold still more, so he was quite willing to agree to the stranger's bargain. He was even willing to seal it with his own blood, cutting his finger to do so, and when all was finished, he exchanged his sticks for a bag of gold and started for home.

But alas, alack, as he neared his gate, it was not the dog that came to meet him. It was his youngest son. The little fellow had climbed out of his crib and was crawling down the path, while the dog was still securely tied in the courtyard.

The poor father's heart was ready to break. "It must have been the devil that tricked me into this,"

he cried. "But I'll not keep the bargain, indeed I will not."

He then put the gold away and would not touch it, and when he chanced upon the devil again, he said, "I've called off the bargain. I would rather have my children than riches."

"That you cannot do," said the devil. "There's no breaking a bargain with the king of the lower world."

Thereafter the poor man had to grow rich whether he would or not, and he made so many dollars the house was overflowing with gold, and there was neither time nor room to count it. The money gave the man no pleasure, however, and as the ten years plus five drew to an end, his face got as long as a fiddle, and he scarcely let the boy out of his sight. The lad was bright beyond his years and could read as well as you or I or even the teacher, and his poor father could not bear to think of losing him.

The lad seemed not at all troubled, however, and one day he said to his father, "There's much that is worrying you, good Father, but have no fear of it. I've read a thing or two or three, and I know how to get the best of that tricky devil. Just take your

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jackknife and whittle a three-legged stool for yourself and a three-legged stool for me. The task won't be hard, for you're clever with your fingers, but you must be sure to finish it before the year is out."

"I will do it at once," said the old man, and he sharpened his jackknife and set to work. He made two stools exactly alike, and though the devil tried hard to stop him, what with breaking his knife and slashing his fingers, he was finished in good time.

Then on the day when the ten years plus five were up, the lad and his father went to the forest, taking the stools with them, and setting them down in the middle of the forest where no roads crossed.

"Now, good Father," said the lad, "seat yourself on your stool and I will draw a circle around you. This will protect you from the devil till sundown, and after that his power over you will be broken and you'll be a free man again."

"That is fine," exclaimed the father. "But how will we keep you safe, my son? You are the one the devil really wants."

"I will draw a circle around my stool, too," said the lad, "and so I'll also be quite safe. But I cannot leave with you at sundown. I must stay here for a



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year and a day unless a princess finds me and whisks me away."

"Well, that is too bad," replied the father, "but we'll take good care of you out here. We'll feed you well with jelly tarts and candies, and when it rains, you shall have our best umbrella, and when it's cold, we'll wrap you in lamb's wool."

"I shall be as cozy as two peas in a pod," said the lad. Then he took his seat in front of his father, and they waited for the devil to come. He soon arrived, tearing through the woods with a dreadful noise, and breathing out smoke and fire.

At sight of the magic circles he shrieked and stamped the earth. "I will not be tricked, old man," he cried to the boy's father. "I paid you well, and now you must pay me."

"You will have to get the lad yourself," said the father. "I've an aching back today, and I can't get off this stool."

The devil then went roaring to the boy. "Come along, you rascal," he cried. "A bargain is a bargain and you belong to me."

"You'll have to catch me first," said the lad, and he sat there on his stool and laughed at the devil.

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This made the fellow hopping mad, and he hopped all day till his feet wore out. But he got nowhere, and when the sun went down and his power was completely broken, he went limping back the way he had come.

The old man shouted for joy to be rid of him, and then he stretched his legs and hurried off home, while the young lad settled down to spend a year and a day in the forest. It was hardly dark, however, before a beautiful young princess came flying by, and when she saw the lad, she said, "What a handsome young man to spend a year and a day alone in the forest. He'll be better company for me than for the birds and the trees," and so down she flew, and taking him in her arms, carried him off to her castle which was far, far away, south of the sun, east of the moon, and in the middle of the wind.

Life was indeed pleasanter in the castle than in the forest, and presently the lad fell in love with the princess, for she was as pretty as she was kind, and he asked her to be his bride. She answered yes at once, and a fine wedding was arranged. But before he was completely married and settled down to life in a castle, the lad thought he should

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pay his parents a bit of a visit to let them know he was safe and sound and doing quite well for himself in the world.

"Well, if you must go home, I'll not stop you," said the princess, "and as it's a long journey, I will even take you there myself, and you may stay as long as you wish. I will also give you a magic ring to wear, and when you think of me and are ready to return, then all you need do is turn the ring and say to yourself, 'I wish to be back with the princess in the castle south of the sun, east of the moon, and in the middle of the wind,' and in a moment you will be here again. But never, never turn your ring and wish me there, for if you do, you'll have trouble indeed, and we'll never be married and live happily ever after."

"I'll do just as you say, and I'll be back before you know it," said the lad. "I want only to tell my good fortune to the old folks and eat a dumpling or two that my mother has cooked."

"Very well," said the princess, and she took the lad's hand in hers, and away they flew back to his home. Then she set him down outside his door and was gone in a flash.

His parents were overjoyed to see him, for they

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were sure the devil had long since claimed him, and they were proud as peacocks to learn he had done so well for himself and was to marry a princess, though they were sorry she had not come with him.

"You should have brought her by all means," said the lad's mother.

"But she could not come," said the lad. "A princess is a busy person."

"Well," said his mother, "is she young and fair? Has she eyes of blue and hair like gold?"

"She is the most beautiful princess in the world," said the son.

"But beauty is as beauty does," said the father. "Can she make good dumplings and bake a tart or two?"

"That she can," said the lad.

But the parents were still not satisfied, "We would like so much to see her," they said. "She could sleep on the best feather bed and eat cakes and cookies all day long. Why don't you wish her here, good son?"

"I cannot and I must not," said the lad.

But they begged and they pleaded, and the son got lonesome for her, too, and so one day he went

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into the garden and turned the ring around and wished the princess there.

In an instant she came flying through the air, but she didn't stop to say hello or how do you do. She snatched the ring from the lad's finger, gave him a sharp box on the ear, and was gone again.

"Now what have I done?" cried the lad, and he at once wished himself back with the princess, but without the ring his wish couldn't come true, so he was left still standing in his father's garden.

He was most unhappy now, and he wouldn't be comforted, though his mother made him dumplings by the peck and his father bought him jelly tarts by the score. Finally he could bear to be at home no longer, and so he took leave of his parents and went to search for his lost love. He wandered here and there with little luck and came at last to a deep forest where he met a couple of imps quarreling at the top of their lungs.

"What's all the yelling and screaming about?" asked the lad.

"I want this pair of boots for my own," said the first imp.

"And I want them for myself," said the second imp. "I found them, and it's finders, keepers."

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"No, I found them," cried the first imp, and they fell to quarreling again and were like to tear the whole forest apart with their racket.

"A pair of boots is nothing to quarrel about," said the lad. "For a bit of money, you can buy another pair."

"Oh, no," cried the imps, "these are magic boots. Whoever wears them can travel ten miles at a stride."

"Well then," said the lad, "I know of nothing better than that you race for them."

"That is just the thing," said the imps. "Will you be the judge?"

"Yes, indeed," said the youth. "Now, do you see that rock down the road a bit? Well, you must both race for it, and the one who gets there and back first may have the boots. Now get on your mark and ready, set, go!"

The imps were away in a flash, pounding the road and raising a terrible dust.

"What foolish imps," said the lad, "but their foolishness is my gain," and he stuck his feet into the boots which the imps had left beside him and was ten miles away in a second.

He walked at a furious pace, and towards sun-

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down, he reached the castle where the king of all the fish lived.

Taking off his boots, he went into the castle and said to the king, "Good king of the fish, can you tell me how to find the princess who lives in the castle south of the sun, east of the moon, and in the middle of the wind?"

"That I cannot," said the king, "but wait here a bit, for soon all the fish will come home to sleep, and as they are great travelers, they may be able to help you."

"Thank you," said the lad, and he set about to wait till all the fish were home. Then the king sent his servant down to the beach where they lay on the sand.

"Good fish," said the servant, "can you tell us where to find the castle south of the sun, east of the moon, and in the middle of the wind?"

But none of them, alas, could help him. "But wait," they said, "for the two oldest fish have not yet come back from the ocean, and as they have seen all the wonders of the world, they may be able to help you."

The servant waited, but the two oldest fish could help him no more than the others.

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"Well, lad," said the king, "'t is plain to be seen that the fish can't help you, and for that I am very sorry, but I will give you a letter to my brother who is king of the birds, and if you can reach him, perhaps he can help you. He's up in the air a good bit and sees more than I. But he lives ever so far away, and the trip is long and hard."

"It will be easy for me," said the lad. "I know how to walk fast." Then he went to sleep and had a good night's rest, and early the next morning he was on his way again with the letter in his pocket and the boots on his feet.

With each step he moved ten miles ahead, and towards sundown he reached the castle where the king of all the birds lived. Taking off his boots, he went inside and said, "Good king of the birds, I bring you word from your brother, the king of the fish, and in return, perhaps you can do a bit for me."

"Yes, indeed," said the king. "What is your wish?"

"Can you tell me where to find the princess who lives in the castle south of the sun, east of the moon, and in the middle of the wind?"

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"That I cannot," said the king. "But tarry here till night falls, for then all the birds will come home to sleep, and as they travel far and see much, they may be able to help you."

"Thank you," said the lad, and he set about to wait till all the birds were home. Then the king sent his servant out to the woods where they were roosting.

"Good birds," said the servant, "can you tell us where to find the princess who lives in the castle south of the sun, east of the moon, and in the middle of the wind?"

But, alas, the birds could tell him nothing. "Wait, however, till the two old crows come back," they said. "The crows see and hear everything and never forget a bit of it."

And so the servant waited, but the old crows could help him no more than the others.

"Well, lad," said the king, "'t is plain to be seen we're of little use to you, and for that I'm quite sorry. But I will give you a letter to my brother who is king of the winds, and if you can reach him, perhaps he can help you. He blows about a good bit to the ends of the earth and sees much more than I. But he lives ever so far away, and

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the trip is long and hard."

"It will be easy for me," said the lad. "I know how to walk briskly." Then he went to sleep and had a good night's rest, and early the next morning he was on his way again with the letter in his pocket and the boots on his feet.

Each step took him ten miles farther, and near sundown, he reached the castle where the king of the winds lived. Taking off his boots, he stepped inside and said to the king, "Good king of the winds, I bring you word from your brother, the king of the birds, and in return, perhaps you can do a bit for me."

"Yes, indeed," said the king. "What is your wish?"

"Can you tell me the way to the castle south of the sun, east of the moon, and in the middle of the wind?"

"That I cannot," said the king. "I'm kept busy minding things here at home. But wait till it is dark, for then all the winds will come home to sleep, and as they blow everywhere and see everything, I've no doubt they can help you."

"Thank you," said the lad, and he set about to wait till the winds were home. Then the king

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sent his servant into the great hall where they lay rustling and sighing.

"Good winds," said the servant, "can you tell us how to find the castle that lies south of the sun, east of the moon, and in the middle of the wind?"

But, alas, the winds could not help him. "Wait, however," they said. "The northwest wind has still to come and as he travels farther than any of us, he may be able to help you."

"Thank you," said the servant, and soon the northwest wind came blustering home and lay down with a bang.

"Now, good wind," said the servant, "can you tell us how to find the castle south of the sun, east of the moon, and in the middle of the wind?"

"Well," said the wind, "I know where it lies, and I get there once in a while, but I could never take a mere walking man with me, for it's much too far away."

"Very well," said the servant and he returned with this message to the king, who was as cross as two sticks to hear the wind talking in such a fashion. "We'll have no nonsense from that

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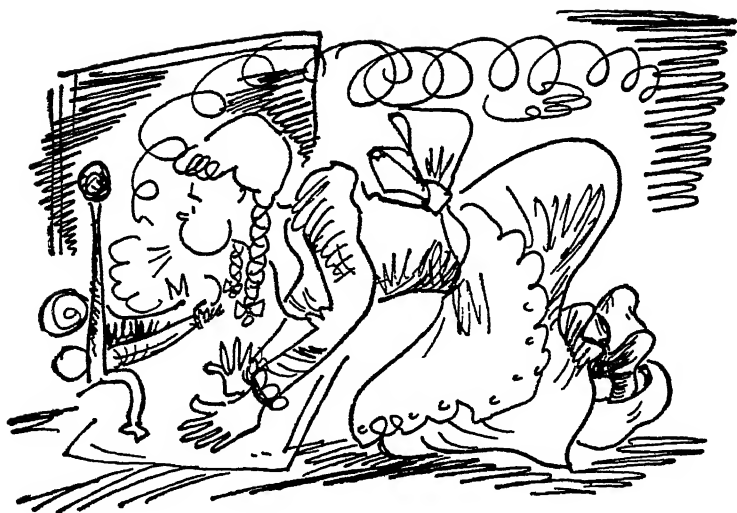
northwest fellow," he cried. "He'll go to the castle tomorrow or I'll turn him into a mere summer breeze and he'll do no more than ruffle a lady's curls. The lad has brought me tidings from my brothers whom I never see, and he must be rewarded."

And so the wind had to do the king's bidding, and early the next morning before the sun was up, the lad had on his boots, and they were on their way. The wind was angry, however, and he sulked and stalled a good bit of the time. In this way the lad got far ahead, and then the wind had to speed up to reach him. He had to go so fast to keep up with him, in fact, that he became a raging storm, and it was barely noon when they neared the castle south of the sun, east of the moon, and in the middle of the wind. By then the northwest wind was so tired he had to lie down and take a rest before he could turn back home, and the lad had to take off his boots and walk the rest of the way in his stocking feet for fear of striding far beyond the castle.

He walked in without waiting and the princess was overjoyed to see him and cried with delight. Then preparations were made for the wed-

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ding, and shortly afterward they were married with great pomp and feasting. There were candies and cakes and sugar cookies by the score, and everyone said it was the best wedding party ever held in the land. The lad and the princess agreed, and then they settled down to live happily in the castle south of the sun, east of the moon, and in the middle of the wind, and if they haven't died yet, they're living there still.



FIDDIVAW

THERE was once a lazy man who married a lazy wife, and they had a son who was lazier still. But they were happy as the day is long, and they lived well enough, too, for they had a horse too lazy to pull a cart, and him they sold for a purseful of money, and they had a cow too lazy to give milk, and her they sold for more money still, and they had a pig too lazy to squeal, and her they sold for a good bit also.

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But after a time the old man died, and the old woman went, too, and then only the son was left.

"Well," said the boy, "I'm not ready to follow the old folks as yet, so I guess I'll go out and have a look around the world. I may find a rich girl, and if so, I can marry her and be a lazy rich man. But if not, then I'll beg and be a lazy poor man. There's little difference in the end, and it's all the same to me."

Then he put some food in his knapsack, took up a stout stick to lean upon and started on his way. He took his time, for he had plenty of that if nothing else, and when evening came, he sat down under a tree to eat his bread and cheese and then rolled over and went to sleep. The next morning he got up when he pleased, ate more bread and cheese, and was on his way again. He slept out in the open that night, too, but by morning he was ready to seek a softer bed, though how he would get one he was not quite sure.

His way led down a narrow path that was bordered by thistles, and as he reached the middle of it, what should he see coming towards him

but a little old woman.

"Well," said the lad, "the path's wide enough for only one, so I'd best step aside and let the old woman have it. I may get scratched, and it takes a little work to scramble in and out of the thistles, but I can't help that." Then out of the path he stepped and waited for the old woman to pass.

"You are indeed a thoughtful lad," said the old woman when she reached him. "Where are you bound?"

"Well," said the lad, "I'm bound no place in particular, but I would like a good bed for to-night though I've no money to pay for it."

"Then indeed you'll sleep poorly," said the old woman, "for empty pockets will buy nothing at all. But since you've been thoughtful of me, I will in turn give thought to you."

"You are most kind," said the lad.

"Now," continued the old woman, "you will leave the bramble path soon, and as you come out, you will see a fine house. You must go up to the house and invite yourself in, but before you enter, you must pick up a little stone that lies just outside, and keep it near you, and you must say 'Many thanks' to everything that is said in the

house no matter how foolish it may sound. Then when all the family have retired, you must lay the stone on the hearth under the ashes where the fire is hidden, and you must leave it there and say never a word about it. You will then have a good bed, and you'll have all the luck in the world besides."

"Many thanks," said the lad. "I will do just as you say for it's no work at all," and as soon as the old woman had passed, he jumped out of the thistles and tramped on till he reached the end of the path. Here he saw a fine house, and up he marched, picked up the little round stone which lay outside the door, and then stepped inside.

He found the housewife at home, and he said, "Good evening, good wife, I would like to stay here tonight and sleep in one of your beds."

"You'll sleep in no bed of mine," said the housewife.

"Many thanks," said the lad, and went past the woman and into the kitchen.

"I say that you can't stay here," cried the housewife. "I've only beds enough for my man and myself and my daughter."

"Many thanks," again said the lad and sat

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down on a bench by the fire, and there the woman let him stay, for she thought he must be deaf, and she hadn't the heart to drive him out.

A little later the woman's husband came home, and at sight of the boy he exclaimed, "Who is this that's come to visit us? He's no kin of mine, so he must be some of yours, good wife."

"He's neither kith nor kin of mine," said the wife, "and thank goodness for that, for he's either deaf or out of his mind, and that's the honest truth. I've told him he can't stay, but all he says is, 'Many thanks.'"

"'T is strange indeed," said the man, "but I daresay he does no harm sitting there in the corner, and meanwhile I'll have a bit to eat, for I'm hungry after a hard day's work." Then he sat down to the table, and his wife brought on a pot of stew, and sat down herself and said, "Eat all you want, and the rest we will have tomorrow."

"Many thanks," said the lad, and before the wife or her husband could say a word, over he came, sat down at the table, and took a big portion of the stew, so much in fact, that there was hardly enough for the man and none at all for

his wife. But they said never a word, for the fellow ate like a poor starved horse, and they hadn't the heart to throw him out.

When the husband had finished his bit of supper, his wife made his bed in the corner and said, "Now you may go to sleep whenever you wish, for you must be just as tired as you were hungry."

"Many thanks," said the lad at the table, and before the man or his wife could turn round, he had off his clothes and was under the covers. But they said not a word, for the lad began to snore like the tiredest man in the world, and they hadn't the heart to turn him out. As there wasn't another bed in the house, however, they had to be content with sleeping on the floor.

When all was quiet and everyone fast asleep, the lad, who had only been playing possum, stole softly out of his bed and tiptoed over to the hearth where he hid the stone in the ashes. Then he lay down and went to sleep himself.

In the morning, the couple's husky young daughter, who slept upstairs, arose early, as was the custom, and came downstairs to make the fire. Taking the poker, she stirred up the ashes and put on fresh fuel. But she couldn't make the wood burn, so

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down she got on her knees to blow up some sparks. But instead of blowing, she found herself saying, "Fiddivaw, fiddivaw, fiddivaw, vaw, vaw." And she couldn't stop herself, and she couldn't start the fire, and so she began to cry and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

The noise awakened the girl's mother and she exclaimed, "What's all this stuff and nonsense, daughter? Here your poor father and I have to sleep on a hard floor all night, and then you awaken us with your crying. Have you no regard for our poor old bones?"

"Ah, fiddivaw," cried the girl, "it won't—fiddi-vaw, fiddivaw, vaw, vaw."

"Oh, you can't get the fire to burn," said the mother. "Well, that's nothing to fuss about." And she got up and went to the hearth and stirred around in the ashes.

But still not a spark flew up, so she, too, got on her knees and tried to blow. But no sooner had she puckered her lips, than out came the words, "Fiddivaw, fiddivaw, fiddivaw, vaw, vaw," and she couldn't stop saying it, and she couldn't make the fire burn. Then she cried as loudly as her daughter, and they made such a noise that they soon awak-

ened her husband.

"What's all this weeping and wailing?" he cried. "Can't a man have a little peace and quiet even in his own house?"

"Ah, fiddivaw—it won't—fiddivaw, fiddivaw, vaw, vaw, vaw," they both cried together.

"Oh, you can't get the fire to burn," said the man. "Well, that's nothing to fuss about. I'll have it going in no time at all." Then he got up and stirred in the ashes. But not a spark came up, and so he knelt down to blow up the fire. But no sooner had he puckered his lips than out came, "Fiddivaw, fiddivaw, fiddivaw, vaw, vaw," just like the others, and he couldn't stop himself, and the fire lay low as ever.

About that time the squire came riding by on his way to town, and when he heard all the noise, he stopped to see what was the matter.

"What's all the moaning and groaning?" he cried, striding into the house. "Is someone dead or dying?"

"Fiddivaw—fire—fiddivaw—burn," said the man and his wife and daughter.

"Oh, so the fire won't burn," said the squire. "Well, that's nothing to weep about, and I'll have

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it going in no time at all."

Then he picked up the poker and stirred among the ashes. But not a spark came up, and so he got on his knees to blow a bit. But no sooner had he puckered his lips than out came the words, "Fiddivaw, fiddivaw, fiddivaw, vaw, vaw," and he couldn't say more nor less and the fire still wouldn't behave.

A little later the schoolmaster came by on his way to school, and as the noise was now enough to waken the dead, the schoolmaster stopped and went up to the house.

"What's all the stewing and fussing about?" asked the schoolmaster. "You can be heard over half the kingdom."

"Fiddivaw—fire—fiddivaw—burn," cried the man and his wife and his daughter and the squire.

"Oh, so the fire won't burn," said the schoolmaster. "Well, that's nothing to howl about, and a man of my learning will soon have it fixed."

Then he picked up the poker and stirred among the ashes. But not a spark flew up so he got to his knees to blow a bit. But no sooner had he puckered his lips than out came, "Fiddivaw, fiddivaw, fiddivaw, vaw, vaw," and he couldn't say more nor less, and the fire lay as dead as ever.



FIDDIVAW

The din was now as dreadful as if the devil and all his imps were howling, and finally the man of the house cried, "Fiddivaw—who'll stop—fiddivaw—who'll save—fiddivaw—have my daughter—fiddivaw—half my money—fiddivaw—"

At this the lad who had heard all the noise but had pretended to be asleep jumped out of bed and said, "Many thanks," and then ran over to the hearth, picked up the stone he had hidden there, and threw it out the door. At once everyone stopped talking and sat down breathless and the fire blazed up and burned brightly.

Then the lad snatched up the girl and kissed her, and when they all had their breath again, the squire fetched the parson and the deacon, and the parson married the boy and girl, and the deacon sang for them, while the schoolmaster read them good wishes, and the squire gave them a wedding feast. Then the parson and the deacon and the squire and the schoolmaster all went home and the young couple settled down in a cottage near the big house. The young man got over his laziness for his wife kept him busy, and since hard work never hurt anyone, they both lived happily ever after.



THE LITTLE HORSE

THERE was once a king who had an only son. He was the handsomest lad you ever laid eyes on, but he was as vain as a peacock, and full of bad manners besides.

Now one spring day it happened that he and his courtiers put on their best bib and tucker and went to the forest to hunt. And while they were looking for a bear or a deer, or even a rabbit or squirrel, what should they see but a poor old man riding a

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poor old horse. The man was skinny and humped, and his clothes were tattered and torn, while the horse was sway-backed and lame and thin as a rail.

"What a dreadful sight," cried the prince, hiding his face with his hand. "How dare such a creature cross the path of the king's son?"

"'T is not my fault that I'm skinny and humped, nor that my poor old horse is bony and lame," said the man. "Just give me your horse to ride and your silk trousers to wear, and I'll be a prince myself."

"Such impudence!" cried the young prince. "Away with you or I'll have the king throw you into jail and chop you into mincemeat."

"Thank you for those kind words," said the old man. "I'll pay you well for them, and in your own coin, too," and he went hobbling down the road on his lame old horse.

A few days later the prince was walking alone in the forest, and whom should he meet again but the same old man.

"Out of my way," cried the prince.

"Just a moment, young fellow," said the old man. "We must first repay you well," and he tapped the prince on the shoulder, and there and

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then His Royal Highness was turned into the poorest little sway-backed horse that ever lived.

"Now," said the old man who, of course, was not really an old man at all, but a powerful troll in disguise, "make yourself comfortable, and don't fret, but learn to eat grass and sleep out in the rain. You mustn't mind a few knocks now and then, either, and if you're starved, that's all right, too, for you'll be a poor little horse for many a year or more. Not till an innocent princess calls you her dearest friend will you be free again, and that won't happen for a long, long time." Then he gave the poor horse a sharp crack across the back and disappeared from sight.

The little horse wandered about in the forest utterly miserable. He longed to go back to the palace, but he was afraid no one would recognize him and he would have to stay out in the stable with the rest of the horses; and even if he were recognized, he would be most unhappy seeing nothing but a long horse's head every time he passed one of the palace mirrors, and he couldn't possibly get four long legs into his delicate suits of silk and satin.

There was nothing to do but stay in the forest and take care of himself as best he could, so he

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looked about for clover and grass to eat, and at night he lay down to sleep on a bed of moss. He missed knives and forks and a bed of down, but on second thought it was easier to nibble his food and sleep without covers. Horse hoofs were good for getting about, but not for keeping house.

Now when the little horse had wandered through the woods for several days, he chanced upon a young farm boy out gathering wood, and he was so happy to see a real person again that he came right up to the lad and rubbed his head against the boy's shoulder.

"What a poor, hungry little horse you are," said the lad, patting his neck. "But a barrel of oats and a bale of hay will soon fix that. Come, we'll go home together and see what we can find for you." Then he picked up his pile of wood, and with the horse following behind him like a tame dog, he started for home.

"Look, Father!" he cried as he came into the barnyard. "Here is a fine horse for us."

"Well," said his father, looking the poor creature up and down, "he may be a horse, but I'd not call him fine."

"He needs only a bit of care," said the lad, "so

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do let us keep him."

"Very well," said his father. "We'll give him a trial."

"Thank you," said the lad, and he put the horse in the stable and fed him oats and hay and sugar lumps, and curried his coat and mane.

In the morning the farmer hitched the horse to the plow and set him to work, and to his surprise he found that the creature pulled very nicely, and showed good horse sense, too, turning neatly at the corners and keeping a straight furrow.

"Well," said the farmer when the day was done, "this old horse works better than he looks, so take good care of him, and he'll serve us well."

"That I will," said Hans, and that he did, indeed, feeding the horse oats and tender clover, and combing his coat till it glistened like silk. Hans called him Friend Four-Legs because they were like real companions, and when Four-Legs wasn't pulling the plow or taking the wagon to market, Hans was riding him through the woods and down the lanes, going at a merry pace. Four-Legs needed no bridle or saddle, only a pat on the neck or a gentle tug at the mane, and in a flash he'd be off and away.

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But when the crops were all in, and there was little need to go to market, the farmer decided he had no more use for the horse, so one day he said to Hans, "Tomorrow you must take Four-Legs into town and have him shod, but tell the smith to put only one shoe on the front and one shoe on the back, for I want you to sell the horse, too, and I might as well save where I can."

Hans did not wish to part with his friend, but his father's word was law and order, and so early the next morning he rode Four-Legs into town and up to the blacksmith's shop. And while the smith was putting on the two shoes, up came an old one-eyed man and said, "That's a fine horse, the finest horse I ever saw."

"Oh, no," said Hans. "He's lame and sway-backed."

"I'll give you a hundred dollars for him," said the one-eyed man.

"That's a good bit of money to part with," said Hans, "so first let me show you how poorly he runs."

"Very well," said the one-eyed fellow.

Hans turned Four-Legs around, and bending over, whispered in his ear, "Run fast, my little

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horse, run fast and far from the one-eyed man," and the horse obeyed him at once. He ran like the wind, his feet scarcely touching the ground, and in a few moments, they were far out of sight.

But when Hans reached home, his father cried, "What! No sale for that fine creature? Why, he's worth his weight in gold."

"He's still much too skinny, good Father," said Hans, and he put the little horse in the stable and fed him hay and oats and lumps of sugar.

The next day the farmer said, "Hans, have another shoe put on the horse and take him straight to market."

Hans set out with a heavy heart and rode slowly to town and up to the blacksmith's shop. Then, while the smith was putting on the third shoe, up came the one-eyed man again.

"That's a fine horse," said the man, "the finest horse I ever saw."

"Oh, no," said Hans. "He's sway-backed and brittle in the knees."

"I'll give you two hundred dollars for him," said the one-eyed man.

"That's a good bit of money," said Hans, "and



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before you part with it, you'd best see how poor his wind is."

"Very well," said the one-eyed man.

Hans turned Four-Legs about, and bending over, whispered in his ear, "Run fast, little horse, run fast and far from the one-eyed man," and the little horse obeyed him at once. He flew like the wind, scarcely touching the ground, and in a moment they were far out of sight.

But when they reached home, the farmer cried, "What! Haven't you sold that creature yet?"

"His wind is not good," said Hans. "See how he huffs and puffs," and he patted the little horse which was indeed breathing hard. Then he took his friend to the stable and rubbed him down and fed him oats and hay and a handful of sugar lumps.

Now the farmer was not at all satisfied with the turn of events, so in the morning, while Hans was still fast asleep, he took Four-Legs out of the stable and rode him into town himself. He stopped first at the smith's to get a fourth shoe, and while the smith was nailing it on, up came the one-eyed man and said, "That's a fine horse you have there, the finest I ever saw."

"He's worth his weight in gold," said the farmer.

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"He works like an elephant, but he eats no more than a bird."

"I'll give you three hundred dollars for him," said the one-eyed man.

" 'T is done," said the farmer, and the exchange was made at once. Then each bade the other good day and they went their separate ways.

Hans, meanwhile, had awakened and dressed and run down to the stable to say good morning to his horse. When he saw that the stable was empty, and that his father was gone, too, he cried a gallon of tears and would not be consoled.

"It's no use to cry over spilt milk," said his mother, and she made him a big breakfast of porridge and cream. But poor Hans couldn't eat, and when his mother wasn't looking, he set out for the market himself.

At the smith's he stopped and said, "Have you seen a big man riding a small horse?"

"Indeed I have," said the smith. "He stopped here for a shoe. But he and the horse soon parted. He sold the creature to a one-eyed man for a good-sized bag of gold."

"That I feared," said Hans. "But perhaps you can tell me which way the one-eyed man traveled

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and where he was bound."

"I can tell you nothing, alas," said the smith. "But surely, for all his bad looks, the fellow must be a king's courtier. Who else could pay so well for one single horse?"

"That is true," said Hans. "I will be off to the castle at once," and away he went as fast as his legs could carry him.

At the castle he asked for work as a stable boy, and since the head groom needed a boy who was honest and hard-working, Hans was given a place. But neither hide nor hair did he see of his little horse or the one-eyed man. The king's courtiers were all as tall and handsome as the day is long, and their horses were all elegant, high-stepping creatures with slender legs and silky manes.

Hans did not give up hope, however, and one day his patience was rewarded, for there in front of the palace steps stood a red cart, and hitched to the cart was none other than his little horse. He ran over to him and threw both arms around him, and the little horse nuzzled his shoulder and whinnied softly.

At the same time the king's youngest daughter, who had been taking a stroll about the courtyard,

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saw Hans and the little horse, and she ran over and said, "What a dear little horse."

"I've searched far and near for him," said Hans, "and though he's not so handsome as your father's horses, he's smart as a whip, and gentle and kind besides."

"I should like to have a horse like that," said the young princess. "I could both ride and drive him, and I could come and go as I pleased."

"Then you must ask the king to buy this little horse," said Hans.

"To whom does he belong?" asked the princess.

"To a dreadful one-eyed man," said Hans, and at that moment, up came the old fellow himself.

"I'll thank you to fetch yourselves away," said the old man.

"We were just admiring your horse," said the princess. "For what will you sell him?"

"He is not for sale," said the one-eyed man.

But just then the king came walking by, and as he always gave the princess everything she wanted, the one-eyed fellow had soon to change his mind and part with the horse. The king paid him a bag of dollars, and the little horse was led to the palace stables.

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"However," said the king, "Hans must take care of this horse and keep him well fed and well groomed. He hardly becomes a princess at present."

"I shall take special care of the horse," said Hans. "Have no fear about that." And he spent his whole time with his old friend, and fed him oats and hay from morn till night, and curried his coat till it shone like silk. Soon the horse looked as handsome, if not as large, as any horse in all the king's stables, and shod with silver and bridled with gold, he carried the princess wherever she wished up and down the countryside.

Now when a year and a day had gone by, the king's oldest daughter went fishing, and while she was fishing, she lost a precious golden ring. She cried buckets of tears, and the king himself was quite distressed, for the ring had been a gift from the queen, and it was a lucky ring besides. It had kept the princess entirely from harm, and now that it was gone, she had troubles enough to fill a house and barn. Her hair wouldn't curl and she spilled soup on her best gown. She lost all her suitors and she fell in a thorn bush and scratched her pretty face.

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Finally the king proclaimed throughout the land that whoever could locate the golden ring could have the princess for his wife and rule half the kingdom besides. This set the whole country to fishing and diving in the lake, for a princess and half a kingdom were nothing to be sneezed at. But never a sign of the ring was found, and no one got anything for his pains but a cold in the head and a pair of wet trousers.

One day Hans took his horse down to the lake to water him, and as the horse was drinking, a large fish came swimming by. The horse quickly dipped in his foot, caught the fish, and tossed it onto dry land. Then he whinnied sharply, and Hans ran up to the fish and bent over it. To his surprise, he saw a glint of gold in the fish's mouth, and when he lifted it by the tail, out fell the princess's golden ring.

"You are indeed clever," said Hans to the horse, and throwing the fish back into the lake, he ran to the castle.

"The ring has been found," he exclaimed. "It was in the mouth of a big fish."

The king and his oldest daughter both rejoiced, and she lost all her troubles at once. Then the

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king said, "Well, Hans Stableboy, I'd never have thought you would sit on a throne, but you've won the hand of the princess fair and square, and I daresay you're not so clever but what you'll make a good prince."

The princess agreed, and Hans didn't say no, but first he must tell them a thing or two. It was not really he who should have all the honor. It should go to the youngest princess's little horse, for it was that clever little fellow that had tossed the fish onto the land.

When the young princess heard this, she ran out of the palace and down to the stable where she clasped her little horse around the neck and cried, "No, my sister may not have you. She can take Hans Stableboy, and they'll live happily ever after, but you I shall keep always, for you are my dearest friend."

At these words, there was no horse to be seen at all. There was, instead, a handsome young prince, and the princess's arms were about his neck.

"Thank you, dear princess," said the prince. "You have saved me from a dreadful spell, and now will you let me marry you?"

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The princess would indeed, and so they were married that day, and the next day Hans and the king's other daughter were wed. And Hans learned to be as elegant as a prince, and the prince learned to be as good and kind as Hans, and they all lived happily ever after.



PETER OX

THERE was once an old couple in Denmark who had a very fine farm with pigs and cows, and horses and sheep, and grass and hay that grew high as your waist. But the old people had no children at all, neither sons nor daughters, and this made them sad, indeed, for they wanted the farm in good hands when they could no longer work it themselves.

Then one day the farmer went to market, and

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while he was there, he saw a little red-and-white calf that he quite fell in love with, and though he had no need for him, he bought the little fellow and took him home. He named him Peter Ox, and as the days went by, the animal grew to be the cleverest and handsomest calf you could ever imagine. He followed the farmer and his wife about like a pet, opening gates and doors and climbing over stiles as easily as you or I, and understanding every word that was said.

"What a fine little fellow he is," said the farmer's wife one day. "If only he could talk, he'd be like a real live boy."

"If only he could talk, we would take him for our son," said the farmer. "Then he could inherit our farm and live here many years in peace and comfort."

"Well," said his wife, "perhaps the squire could teach him to talk. The squire's a very smart man, and he speaks words that would break your jaws and mine."

"That is a fine idea," said the farmer. "I will go to the squire and ask him at once."

The squire lived not far away in a fine, big house, and the next morning bright and early, the

farmer set off to see him.

"Well," said the squire, "what takes you away from your farm today?"

"I have a favor to ask you," said the farmer.

"I trust it isn't money you're after," said the squire. "I never borrow and I never lend."

"No, indeed, it's not money," said the farmer. "I was wondering if you would undertake to teach my calf, Peter Ox, to talk. He is as clever as any man alive, and if only he could be made to speak, then he would be like a real live boy, and we could leave our farm to him."

Now the squire was a sharp fellow and knew a good opportunity when he saw one, so he looked carefully round to make sure that no one was listening to them, and then he said to the farmer, "Yes, I will teach your calf, Peter, and gladly. But you mustn't pass the word about, for if the school-master should hear of it, we'd get into trouble."

"I won't tell a soul," promised the farmer.

"And another thing," said the squire. "It will cost a little something to teach him well. I will need some very expensive books and pencils and slates and other things."

"Think nothing of the cost," said the farmer.

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"I have a knapsack of money with me and more where that comes from."

"Very well," said the squire. "For the present, give me a hundred silver dollars, and in the evening when everyone is asleep, bring the calf."

The farmer did as the squire directed, and in the evening when it was dark and all good people in bed, he stole out of the house, tied a rope around Peter's neck and led him away to the squire's.

A week later he returned. "Well, how does my little Peter Ox do?" he asked. "Can he talk as well as the king himself?"

"He is doing remarkably well," said the squire. "I never saw such a clever little fellow. But you must not ask to look at him now, for if he sees you he will be homesick, and then all my good work will be undone."

"Very well," said the farmer. "I'll come another time."

"But before you leave," said the squire, "I will need another hundred dollars. It takes ever so much of everything to teach a calf, even a clever one, for he's always breaking slates and tearing books."

The farmer had a hundred dollars which he

meant to put in the bank, but as nothing was too good for his dear little calf, he gladly gave the money to the squire, and then returned home empty-handed but full of high hopes.

After another week, he again returned to the squire.

"Well, how goes my little calf now?" he asked. "Does he speak as well as the king himself?"

"He knows a little," said the squire. "He can say 'Mmmm.' "

"My, but he is clever," said the farmer. "Soon he'll know all the A B C's, and then he'll be reading as well as speaking."

"Yes, that is true," said the squire. "But now we need more money for books, and some money for food, too. An empty stomach makes an empty head, you know. We need at least another hundred dollars."

The farmer had just that amount, and though he was very anxious to save it and put it in the bank, still he could deny his little Peter Ox nothing, and so he gave the money to the squire and returned home empty-handed but with high hopes.

Some weeks passed during which the farmer could not go to see how his dear Peter Ox was

doing, for he had a sick horse and a lame back, and his wife was ailing, too. In the meantime, the squire decided that the calf was just right for taking to market, and so he sold him to the butcher for a good price and spent the money on himself. Then he put a big smile on his face and went to see the farmer.

"Good day," he said. "I trust you're well pleased with your young Peter Ox."

"But I haven't seen him," said the farmer.

"Well, that is strange," said the squire, "for now he talks as well as you or I, and this very morning he said he would like to come and pay you a little visit. I started out with him, but then I found I had left my walking stick behind, and as a man in my position can't be seen without his walking stick, I ran back after it. When I returned, Peter was gone, and I thought he must have run straight home to you. If he has not done that, I do not know where he has gone."

"Then he has run away and is lost," cried the old man and his wife, and they both set up a great weeping and wailing.

"Oh, he can take care of himself," said the squire. "He's clever enough for that. But I must

say it was most ungrateful of him to run off and leave us without so much as a thank you."

"Yes, he was ungrateful," said the old man, "and now we've no one to be our son and take over the farm."

"Well, I'll gladly let you give the farm to me," said the squire. "In fact, Peter often said I should be the one to have it, for I could spend the money it brings in so much more freely than he. After all, what use would he have for a big farm and a bank full of money? He can't live in a fine house or sleep between sheets. He can't ride in a carriage or wear fine clothes."

"He could have bought fine books and learned to read and write," said the farmer.

"Well, that may be true," said the squire, "but there's little to life if it's spent only reading and writing. Now, good folk, you've seen the last of that bad Peter Ox, so just forget him, and I'll be your ever-willing heir."

But the good folk were too grieved to promise anything just then, and so the squire had to leave them no richer than he came. He pestered them daily, however, and they were almost ready to agree to his wishes, when one day, the farmer came

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across a newspaper from the city. He read the paper from cover to cover as he didn't often see one in the country, and what should he find on the back page but that a young man named Peter Ox had arrived there and was ready and willing to go to work.

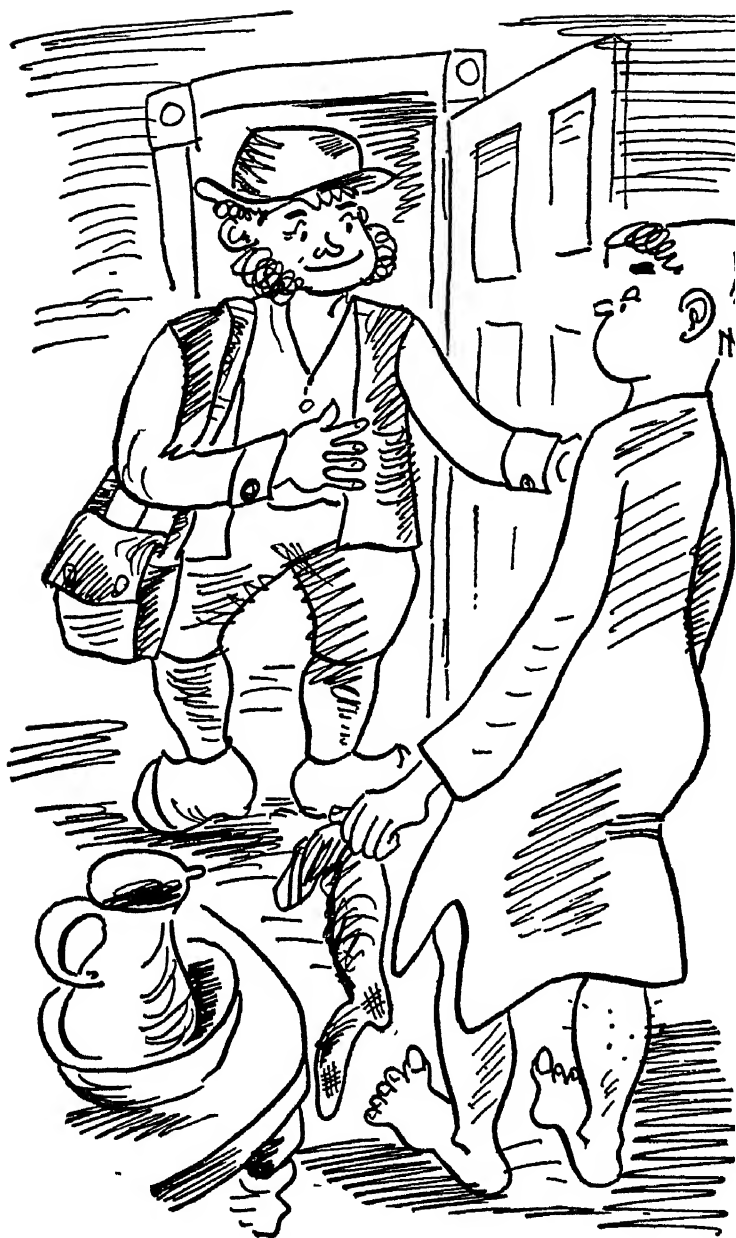
"This must be our son," he cried to the old woman. "My, how I should like to see him."

"Then go at once," said the old woman, "but take a sackful of money with you, for a young man in the city always needs money."

The old man agreed, and early the next morning he filled his knapsack with money, and his pockets with bread and butter, and started on his way. He traveled all day and all night with only a bit of time off for some food and a few winks of sleep, and at dawn the next morning he reached the city and went straight to the house where the young man lived.

"Is my boy, Peter Ox, at home?" he asked the landlord.

"Oh, yes," said the landlord. "He's a sober young fellow. He went to bed early last night, and he's rising just now. But I don't think he's quite ready for company."



"That's all right," said the old man. "I'm only his father. Just show me the way to his room."

This the landlord did, and at sight of the young man who was up but not dressed, the old man shouted for joy. Here indeed was his own Peter Ox, brown eyes and red hair and broad shoulders—everything he remembered so well. The only difference was that now he looked like a real man instead of a calf, but that was no doubt the result of all the squire's training and was so much to the good.

"My, but I'm glad to see you, Peter," cried the old man, and he threw his arms around him. "Your mother and I were very grieved when you ran away from the squire, for we had spent a good many dollars on your education, and we wanted to leave you the farm. But I daresay you meant no harm and only wished to have a look about the world before you settled down."

"That is quite true," said the young man, though truth to tell, he had never seen the farmer before in his life. He thought it best to humor him, however, and besides, the old fellow looked so pleased that he hadn't the heart to disappoint him.

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"You're only young once," he said, and then he offered the farmer a chair and asked permission to go on with his dressing.

The farmer sat down but soon stood up again, the better to admire the young man. "Well, I do declare," he said. "The squire did a wonderful job with you, for now you look so much like a real person that no one would ever guess we bought you as a little calf in the market. My, how proud your real parents would be if they could see you now. But, alas, they are gone. Your father was sold in Germany for wienerwursts, and your mother in Sweden for meatballs. My wife and I will try to take their place, however, and we'll be a second mother and father to you. You will call me Father, won't you?"

"By all means," said the lad.

"The farm will be yours," said the old man, "but if you'd rather stay in the city, we'll not force you to return. I've brought money enough to take care of you here," and he emptied his knapsack on the table. There was so much money that it covered the whole table and then spilled onto the floor.

Now the young man had neither kith nor kin

nor money nor trade, and so he could have done nicely with the old man's dollars and no one have been the wiser. But he was an honest lad and wanted nothing he had not earned, so he took only a bit of money for the feel of it in his pockets, and the rest he returned to the knapsack.

"I can't take your money," he said, "but I'll gladly go with you and help on the farm provided it's as real as your money and not just nonsense like your talk."

"It's the best farm in the country, Peter Ox, and you'll be the finest farmer. Will you come at once?"

Peter said yes, for he had little to lose, and the old farmer seemed harmless enough. So as soon as he was dressed, they started on their way.

They traveled all that day and the next day, too, and reached home just at suppertime. The old woman was stirring a pot of stew in the kitchen, and at sight of the lad, she cried with delight. She would never have guessed her little red-and-white calf could have turned into such a fine man, but like her good husband, she could easily tell they were one and the same. There was no denying those brown eyes and broad forehead, and she hurried to

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set a fine table of food, for if there was one thing Peter liked, it was a big, hearty meal.

The lad was hungry and the food was good, and he ate the table clean and pleased the old woman no end. Then he said, "I thank you kindly for all this fine food, and if you've some work, I'll gladly do it."

"But first we must visit the squire," said the farmer, and so they put on their best bib and tucker and were off to the squire's.

That unworthy fellow was scolding his milkmaids and wishing he knew a few more stupid fellows like the rich farmer, with calves they thought could be taught to speak.

"We've found him, we've found our dear Peter Ox," cried the farmer. "My, what a wonderful teacher you were to make him just like a man."

"What!" cried the squire. "Is this fellow passing himself off as your little calf? Why, that is nonsense. If you must have the truth, you stupid fellow, I sold your calf to the butcher for a good bit of money, and he has long since been eaten. This fellow is a thief and a rascal."

"I am neither a thief nor a rascal," cried Peter Ox. "I came with the farmer only to earn an hon-

est penny or two, but I'll go the way I came if he thinks otherwise, and I'll not wait till morning to do so."

"No, you must stay, Peter Ox," cried the farmer. Then he turned to the squire and gave him such a shove that he went sprawling to the ground. "You are the thief," cried the farmer. "You are the thief and the rascal, and I am a foolish old man to have trusted you. But now we are quits, and I'll thank you not to let me see hide or hair of you again." Then he gave the bad fellow a kick for good measure, and he and Peter went home.

He told his old wife what had happened, and they were both glad that Peter was a real man and not just an educated calf. They made him their son and gave him the farm, and he took care of it so well that it became the best farm in the whole country. The old couple lived there happily to the end of their days, and Peter Ox, no doubt, is living there still.



THE BOY WHO WAS NEVER AFRAID

ONCE upon a time an old man and his wife had a son named Hans. The boy was brave as a lion, but wild as the wind, and you couldn't have frightened him with a hundred ghosts and goblins. As for reading and writing, he'd settle down to none of that, and his poor old parents decided he was quite too much for them to handle.

"We'll have to send him to live with the dea-

con,” said his father at last. “That worthy man will put a bit of fear into him. He has a loud voice to scold the lad and a long arm to switch him.”

“Very well,” said the old wife. “I hate to lose the lad, but there’s much he has to learn.”

The next day they took Hans to the deacon, and the deacon was glad to have a strapping young fellow to haul water and hew wood, and he had no doubt he could teach the boy a thing or two, also.

Hans proved to be a good worker, and hauled and hewed till there was wood enough to burn down the house and water enough to swim in. But he worked only when it pleased him and wouldn’t be told yea or nay, and he might have been deaf for all he listened to the deacon’s scoldings. Since he could walk faster than the deacon could run, the switchings never reached him.

“Well,” said the deacon, “that boy must have had a troll for a mother or father, but he’ll learn a thing or two yet or I’m not the deacon.”

And so one holiday eve he called to Hans and said, “The sexton’s lame, and I’m lame, and there’s no one to ring the church bells tonight. You must do it, my lad, and here’s a penny or two for your trouble.”

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"It's no trouble at all," said Hans, and as soon as he was ready, he set out for the churchyard. It was pitch dark and you couldn't see your hand before your face, but this didn't bother the lad, and in less time than it takes to tell it, he was up the stairs to the tower, and ringing the bells so loudly they could be heard through half the kingdom.

When he had finished, he turned to go down again, but there in front of him, barring his way at the turn of the stairs, was a long white ghost.

"Good evening," said Hans. "If you'll just step aside, I'll go back to the deacon."

But the ghost didn't move an inch, just stood there staring at the lad, and so as it was late and cold and Hans had no mind to stay there all night, he gave the ghost a good push and sent him rolling down the stairs. Then he went on home to the deacon's house, whistling as if nothing had happened.

"Didn't you meet anyone?" asked the deacon's wife.

"Only a ghost," said Hans, "and a mighty impolite one at that. He wouldn't let me pass, so I sent him spinning down the stairs."

"Oh, dear!" cried the deacon's wife. "I hope you



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didn't hurt him. We must go back and have a look."

And back they went to the church tower, and there at the foot of the stairs, they found none other than the deacon himself. He was bruised and battered, and beside him lay a tattered sheet.

Hans and the good man's wife helped him up, and Hans said, "Did you meet the ghost, too, good deacon?"

"I met worse than a ghost," said the deacon, "and I don't want to see hide or hair of you again, young fellow. Go back to your parents and tell them I wish them good riddance."

Hans returned home at once, but he was more than his parents could handle, and so one day his father said, "We'll send him to the squire. That worthy man will put a bit of fear in him, for his tongue is harsh and his whips are long."

"Very well," said the old wife. "I hate to lose the lad, but there's much he has to learn."

They sent him to the squire next market day, and the squire was glad to have a strapping young fellow to cut hay and thresh grain, and he was sure he could teach him a few things, too.

Now Hans was a good worker and cut hay

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enough to feed half the cows in the kingdom, and he threshed grain till the bins were ready to burst. But he worked only when it pleased him and wouldn't be told yea or nay. He turned a deaf ear to the squire's scolding, too, and the whip, while long, wasn't long enough to reach him.

"Well," said the squire, "I never saw the likes of him. He's not afraid of man or beast, and I do declare he must be half troll. But I'll teach him a thing or two yet."

Late that night he called Hans to him and said, "Hans, my boy, I've a lame arm and a lame foot, and there's no one to lock the barns and stables tonight. You must do it for me, and here's a penny for your trouble."

"That's no trouble at all," said Hans, and as soon as he was ready, out he went.

It was pitch dark and you couldn't see your nose before you, but that didn't bother Hans, and in less time than it takes to tell it, he had locked every one of the barns and stables. Then he turned to go back to the house, but there in front of him, barring his way, was a long black spook with fiery eyes.

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"Good evening," said Hans. "If you'll just move aside, I'll be on my way."

But the spook didn't budge an inch, only stood there blocking the path, and as it was cold and late and Hans had no mind to stay there forever, he gave the spook a shove and sent him rolling across the courtyard. There Hans left him and went whistling back to the house as if nothing had happened.

"But didn't you see anything?" asked the squire's wife.

"Oh, I saw a long black spook with fiery eyes," said Hans. "But I gave him a shove and he was soon out of my way."

"Oh, dear!" cried the wife. "You might have hurt him. We must go out to the barn and have a look."

Out they went, and there at the end of the yard lay the squire. He was bruised and battered, and beside him lay a torn black cloak.

Hans and the squire's wife helped him up, and Hans said, "Did you meet a spook, too, good squire?"

"I met worse than a spook," cried the squire,

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"and I'll have no more of your nonsense, you young rascal. Go back to your parents and tell them I wish them good riddance."

Hans returned home, but he was soon too much for his parents, and so one day they said to him, "Well, if you'll not learn from the deacon or the squire or your poor old parents, then you'll have to go out in the world and learn by yourself," and they gave him a penny or two and a basket of lunch and sent him on his way.

He traveled all day till evening, and then he sat down to have a bit of supper and a wink or two of sleep. When he awakened, it was close to midnight, and near by sat three trolls playing a game of cards.

"Well," said Hans, "I could do with a penny or two from those trolls for I've a long way to go," and so he walked over to them and said, "I'll play a bit with you if you'll make room for me."

"There's room to be had if you've money to lose," said the biggest and ugliest troll.

"I've plenty of that to be sure," said Hans, and so the trolls let him join them, and as he had a quick hand and a clever head, he won quite a few pence.

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But before the trolls paid him, one of them said,

*"Soon the white cock will be crowing,
So down in the earth we must be going,"*

and he put away his cards and tied up his money.
Then the second troll said,

*"Soon the sky will be turning red,
So down we must run into our beds,"*

and he, too, put away his cards and tied up his money.

Then the third one said,

*"Soon the farmer will be up and about,
So down we must go or we'll all be shut out,"*

and he put away his cards and tied up his money.

This left Hans not a penny richer and so he said,
"I'll ask you not to forget that you owe me some money. I'm a poor man and every penny counts."

For answer the trolls pulled his nose and pinched his legs. This made him very angry, and so he swung at them and gave them each such a blow that their heads fell off and rolled over the ground like pumpkins. But they didn't mind losing their heads at all. They picked them up, set them on

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again, and ducking away from Hans, disappeared down a hole in the ground.

"Well," said the lad, "I'm not to be cheated like that. I'll follow those rascals and get my money or my name isn't Hans," and down he dived after them.

The hole was black as pitch and he couldn't see his feet before him, but that didn't stop him, and he went on falling down and down till he came into broad daylight and landed at last in a beautiful green meadow. The trolls were nowhere to be seen, but not far away was a little house, so over he walked and knocked at the door.

"Walk softly and you may enter," said a voice, and Hans opened the door and walked in. There stood an old man with a long beard and a cane in his hand.

"Well," said the old man, "what's a tall straight lad like yourself doing here?"

"I've come for the money that's due me," said Hans, and he told the old man how the trolls had cheated him.

"But weren't you afraid to come way down here?" asked the old man.

"I'm not afraid of man or beast," said Hans,

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"and there's nothing above earth or below that can scare me."

"Well, you are a brave fellow," said the old man, "and for that you should be paid well, though you'll not get a penny from the trolls. I will take care of you, however. I'll give you a bit of magic wax that cures aches and pains wherever it touches. If you use it wisely and use it well, you'll be bound to go far in this world."

Hans took the wax and thanked the old man, though, truth to tell, it looked little enough to be thankful for. It might have been the stub of a plain tallow candle, and it certainly couldn't feed him or clothe him or cover him on a cold night.

"Now," said the old man, "you came down by the hard way, but I'll show you out the easy way," and he led Hans to a great iron door. "Shut your eyes, hold your breath, and count to three," he said as he opened the door. This Hans did, and in a moment he was above ground again. It was broad daylight, the sun was high in the sky, and everyone was up and about.

"Well," said Hans, "I've neither money nor work to burden me, so I think I'll travel up and down and see a bit of the world," and away he

started.

That night he came to a miller's house and begged for a night's lodging.

"Well," said the miller, "you're a likely fellow, and I can give you a meal, but a bed you'll have to seek elsewhere, for we're full to the rafters."

"I could sleep in the mill," said Hans. "A sack of wheat makes a soft enough pillow for a weary lad."

"The mill is a fearful place at night," replied the miller. "There's moaning and groaning and flying sparks."

"'T is only the wind and the stars," said Hans. "Besides, I sleep sound as a log."

"Well, if you're not afraid you're welcome to it," said the miller, and he gave Hans a blanket and the lad went to sleep in the mill. But about midnight, he was awakened by a terrible blowing and banging, and a few moments later in marched four big cats followed by an old troll. The troll was deaf in one ear, blind in one eye, and lame and sore all over. He sat down with a groan in the middle of the floor, then waved a crooked finger at the cats, and in a flash of sparks and smoke they disappeared out the window.

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"Good evening," said Hans.

"It's a bad evening," grumbled the troll. "Would I were in my own bed."

"Well," said Hans, "I'll be glad to show you the door, for I'd like a bit of sleep myself."

"I cannot go," said the troll.

"And why must you stay?" asked Hans.

"To guard a pot of gold left by a bad man long ago," said the troll.

"Well," said Hans, "the night's still long and cold, so let me lend you my blanket."

"You're a good lad," said the troll.

"I can do more for you, too," said Hans. "I can cure your blind eye and deaf ear and all your aches and pains."

"Then do it at once," said the troll.

"On one condition," said Hans.

"Name your condition," said the troll.

"You must give me the pot of gold that you guard," said Hans.

"That is a painful bargain," said the troll.

"Your aching bones are more painful still," said Hans.

That was true as true, the troll well knew, and so for a good new eye, he showed Hans the corn

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where the gold lay hidden, and for a good new ear, he loosened the stones, and for rubbing all the aches and pains away, he pulled out the gold itself and set it down before the lad. It was in a pot as big as a soup kettle, and Hans had never seen so much wealth in all his born days.

Hans thanked the troll, and the troll thanked Hans and then skipped across the room as spry as a kitten. He called his big cats, and they came back through the window and followed him out the door never to be seen in those parts again.

Hans picked up the gold, tucked it behind some sacks of wheat, and then went back to bed and slept the whole night through. He slept so late, in fact, that the miller was sure the howling and shrieking had frightened the life quite out of him, and he came tiptoeing into the mill expecting to find the lad as dead as a doornail.

But there lay Hans yawning and rubbing his eyes.

"I thank you for a good night's rest," said the lad.

"What!" cried the miller. "You slept the whole night through and neither saw nor heard a thing?"

"Well," said Hans, "I had a visit from a troll

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and four black cats. But we'll not see them again, and for their trouble, they've left us a pot of gold. One share is for me, one for you, and one for all the poor in the parish."

Then he pulled out the pot of gold and divided it into three big piles, and one went to the miller, one to himself, and one to all the poor in the parish. The miller and all the people thanked him, and then he bade them good day and was on his way again. But the gold was heavy, so he decided not to roam about the world so much, and when he came to the city, he lightened his load a bit and bought some fine clothes and a carriage.

Then he heard that the king was ill with aches and pains, and so he went to the palace to cure him. He rubbed him with his magic wax, and made him feel so well that he got up there and then and danced a jig right in the middle of the floor and then wished to pay Hans with his greatest treasure which, of course, was his daughter. And since Hans was handsome and the princess quite pretty, they were both agreeable to the match and the marriage was celebrated shortly thereafter.

Hans now had to settle down and couldn't roam about the world at all, but with a pot of gold on

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one hand, and a princess on the other, he was really quite happy. He even took up reading and writing, and when the old king died, he sat on the throne. He ruled wisely and well, and the queen and he and all the kingdom lived happily ever after.



THE SLEIGH RIDE

THERE was once a king in a faraway land, and though I can't recall his name, I know he had a daughter who was as sober and sour as the day is long. She either cried or she sulked, and you couldn't have made her laugh if you had been the funniest clown in the whole kingdom.

Such a state of affairs worried the king, for it would never do to have a weeping woman on the throne when he was dead and gone, so he gave out word that whoever could make his daughter laugh

should have her for his wife and be a prince in the land besides.

This brought rich and poor and high and low trooping to the palace with jokes and songs and funny sayings, for to be a prince and wed a princess is quite a prize indeed. But not a soul in the kingdom had any success, and never so much as the ghost of a smile could be coaxed from the princess. The young men only made themselves foolish, and back they had to go to their farms and their shops and be content with ordinary wives and no titles at all.

"Well, I do declare," said the king at last. "I think I've had enough of this nonsense. I want young men who can really make the princess laugh, not every Tom, Dick, and sober Harry in the kingdom, so from this day forward, anyone who tries and fails shall be covered in tar, rolled in feathers, and thrown head first out of the palace."

Word to this effect was given out, and fewer lads than before appeared at the palace. But still there were enough and more, for of course everyone thinks that *he* is the funniest fellow in the world. They all failed, however, and the king's servants used up many a barrel of tar and many a feather

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bed tarring and feathering the poor unlucky fellows.

Now in the same country there lived an old farmer who had three sons. The first was called Peter, the second one Paul, and the third one Nosey Jasper. They lived quite alone, with not a neighbor in sight, and so it was some time before they heard how a young man could win a fortune if only he'd make the sour princess laugh.

"Well," said Peter when the news arrived, "I'm just the man to do that deed, for I know a hundred and one funny stories." Then his mother made him a big lunch, his father gave him a full purse, and he started on his way at once.

When he had walked a bit, he met an old woman who was pulling a little sled.

"I'll thank you for a crust of bread and a penny or two," said the old woman.

"No, indeed," said Peter. "There's only enough for one. I've a big stomach and the journey is long."

"It will be a bad journey," said the old woman.

"Not at all," said Peter. "I am the funniest man in the world and I know a hundred and one funny stories." And there and then he told one, and though the old woman did not stay to listen, he

enjoyed it himself and laughed so hard he was blue in the face and had to sit down and rest before he could go on.

When he reached the palace, he said to the guard, "I've come to make the princess laugh."

"Well," said the guard, "you're not the first to say that, and you'll not be the last. But try if you must," and he led Peter into the palace where the princess sat looking as sour as vinegar. Just the sight of her was enough to pucker your mouth.

"I guarantee to make the princess laugh," said Peter to the king. "I can tell a hundred and one funny stories, and you'll laugh till you're blue in the face."

"That is good," said the king. "I'm quite tired of a sad and sour daughter," and Peter stood on his toes and began his stories.

But not the ghost of a smile did he get from the princess, though he talked till he was hoarse and laughed till he nearly died, and when he was through, the king cried, "Away with the fellow," and the guards whisked him out, tarred and feathered him, and threw him out of the palace. He was scarcely able to get home, and it cost his mother a whole tub of lard to get rid of the dreadful tar

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and feathers.

But where Peter had failed, Paul might win, for he knew a hundred and one funny songs, and so he said he would try his luck. His mother made him a big lunch, his father gave him a full purse, and he was soon on his way.

When he had walked a good bit, he met an old woman who was pulling a little sled.

"I'll thank you for a crust of bread and a penny or two," said the old woman.

"No, indeed," said Paul. "There's only enough for one. I've a big stomach and the journey is long."

"It will be a bad journey," said the old woman.

"Not at all," said Paul. "I'm the funniest man in the world and I know a hundred and one funny songs." And there and then he sang one, and though the old woman did not stay to listen, he himself laughed so hard he was purple in the face and had to lie down and take a nap before he could go on.

When he reached the palace, he said to the guard, "I've come to make the princess laugh."

"Well," said the guard, "you're not the first to say that, and you'll not be the last. But try if you must," and he led Paul into the palace where

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the princess sat weeping quarts of tears. There were fully enough to drown in if you couldn't swim.

"I guarantee to make the princess laugh," said Paul. "I know a hundred and one songs, and you'll laugh till you're purple in the face."

"That is good," said the king, "for I'm quite tired of a sad and sour daughter," and Paul stood on his toes and began to sing.

He sang away till his voice was hoarse, and he laughed till he nearly died, but not a tear did he stop, and when he had finished, the king cried, "Away with him," and the guards snatched him away, tarred and feathered him, and threw him out of the palace. He was scarcely able to get home, and it cost his mother a whole tub of butter to get rid of the horrible tar and feathers.

Nosey Jasper now decided that he should try his luck.

"No, indeed," said his parents. "We've no more butter or lard to waste on tar and feathers."

"But perhaps I shall not fail," said Jasper.

"How could you do else but fail, you silly boy?" cried his mother. "You can neither tell stories like Peter nor sing like Paul. They are really funny fel-

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lows, and if the princess refuses to laugh at them, she'll be sure to laugh at no one."

But the boy would not change his mind. He would indeed try his luck with the princess, and so his mother gave him a loaf of dry bread, his father gave him a few pennies, and he started on his way.

After a time he grew tired and hungry and sat down to have a bit of rest and a slice of bread or two. But hardly had he eaten a mouthful, when along came a little old woman pulling a curious sled.

"I'll thank you for a crust of bread and a penny or two," said the old woman.

Jasper gave her half of his bread and all of his pennies.

"Where are you bound?" the old woman then asked.

"I'm bound for the palace to make the princess laugh," said Jasper. "Then I can marry her and live happily ever after."

"That's a hard task," said the old one. "Have you thought of how you'll do it?"

"No, that I haven't," answered Jasper, "but I'm sure to hit upon something."

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"You're sure to hit upon tar and feathers," said the old one. "But one good turn deserves another, and so I'll help you. I'll give you my sled. There is a little bird carved on the back as you can see, and when you seat yourself and say, 'Peep, little bird!' it will ride off with you and not stop for man or beast until you say, 'Stop, little bird.' Then it will stand dead still and not move an inch until you want it to go again. It will turn for you, too, either to right or to left at the wink of an eye, and if anyone touches it, it will say, 'Peep, peep,' and then if you say, 'Hold fast!' the culprit will be stuck there tight as glue no matter if he's prince or poor man, and he can't let go till you say, 'Let go!' Now, young man, take good care of your sled and see that no one steals it from you, and then I'm sure you'll be very lucky."

Jasper thanked the old woman many times, then seated himself in the fine little sled. He said, "Peep, little bird," and away it went down the road with him as if pulled by the wind. He drove on till evening, never once slowing or stopping a bit, and then he winked to the right, and they turned and drove into an inn to stay overnight. The landlord gave him a fine room, and as he was very tired,

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he tied up his sled to the bedpost, and then went straight to bed himself.

Now the servants at the inn had watched the lad come riding up in his sled, and as they had never before seen such a strange and wonderful object, they were most anxious to get a second glimpse of it. The maids were especially curious, and during the night when everyone was asleep, one of them came tiptoeing into the room in her night clothes to see it. She crept right up to it and couldn't keep from reaching out and touching the wonderfully carved little bird.

At that the bird said, "Peep, peep," Jasper woke up and cried "Hold fast!" and there the poor maid was stuck fast, and she couldn't let go though she tugged and pulled with might and main.

A short while later, the second maid came tiptoeing into the room to have a look at the sled, too. But the first maid stood in the way, and so she took hold of her arm to push her away. Then the bird said, "Peep, peep," and Jasper called, "Hold fast!" so the second maid, alas, was stuck fast as the first, and though she tugged and she turned, it did no good and she couldn't budge an inch.

Now the third maid was as curious as the other

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two, and so before morning, she also crept up to have a look at the sled. The second maid stood in her way, so she caught hold of her arm to push her aside. But just then the bird said, "Peep, peep," and Jasper said, "Hold fast!" so she was stuck fast, too, and though she pulled and she pounded, she couldn't get away.

Early in the morning, just as the innkeeper and his wife were stirring, Jasper got up, untied his sled, and went down the stairs and out of the inn, followed, of course, by the three poor maids who were stuck fast and had to go whether they would or not. They were really not dressed to show themselves in broad daylight, what with their night clothes and bare feet and their hair all in curlers, and they were a funny sight indeed, but Jasper pretended he didn't see them at all. He climbed into his sled, said, "Peep, little bird," and away they went with the poor maids flying behind them.

But they hadn't gone far when the innkeeper came running after them. "Stop, stop," he cried. "You've not paid your bill, young man. And you, lazy housemaids, what do you mean by running after him? Who's to make beds now and wait on my tables?" And he grabbed the arm of the last

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maid to stop them. But the bird said, "Peep, peep," and Jasper said, "Hold fast!" so the innkeeper was stuck, too, and had to run along with the rest of them.

Now the innkeeper's wife had come running after her husband, and when she saw him with the three housemaids, she cried, "So this is where you are, running after three good-for-nothing housemaids! Well, I'll teach you a thing or two," and she grabbed his collar to pull him away. But then the bird said, "Peep, peep," and Jasper said, "Hold tight!" so the innkeeper's wife had to go dancing down the road, too.

Presently they came to a smithy. The smith had just shod a horse, and he still held the pincers in his right hand, while in his left was a wisp of hay he had ready to feed to the horse. The smith was a happy sort of fellow. He shouted with laughter as the procession passed him, and he reached out the pincers and caught hold of the old wife's apron strings.

Then the bird cried, "Peep, peep," and Jasper said, "Hold fast!" and the smith had to join the parade and dance along with the rest of them, the bunch of hay dragging after him down the road.

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Soon they came to a flock of geese. The geese saw the hay, and they waddled after it, and snapped at it with their bills.

"Peep, peep," said the bird.

"Hold fast!" cried Jasper, and all the geese were held fast. All their cries and cackling didn't help them in the least.

Now it wasn't long before they reached the king's palace, and Jasper swung three times around the palace grounds, and all had to follow him, the three maids moaning and groaning, the innkeeper huffing and puffing, the old wife weeping and wailing, the smith ranting and raving, and the geese cackling and crying.

Such a hullabaloo brought the whole palace running to the windows to see what was the matter, and when they saw the funny procession, they burst out laughing. The king and princess were there, and when the king who was like to die with laughter looked at the princess, she was laughing so hard the tears streamed down her cheeks.

Jasper came round the palace once more, and as he, too, saw the princess laughing, he said, "Stop, little bird!" and the sled stopped dead still. Then he said, "Let go, little bird!" and at once every-



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one was free, and away they flew as fast as their legs could carry them, the geese, the smith, the old wife, and all, and they never stopped till they were home safe and sound.

As for Jasper, he ran up the steps to the princess and said, "At last you're cured and now you'll be mine."

Well, that was the truth, and there was nothing more to be said, and so Nosey Jasper married the princess, and became a prince besides, and if any of us know where his marvelous sled is now, perhaps we can do the same.



THE GOLDEN BIRD

ONCE upon a time there lived a king who had a fine kingdom and three fine sons. But while the boys were still young, the king fell gravely ill, and not a doctor nor a wise man in the kingdom could cure him. Finally a wizard was brought from the east, and when he looked at the king, he said, "The king lies very ill, indeed, but I have the means to cure him." And he drew from under his cloak a little green twig that might have come from a peach or a plum tree, or even an apple or pear.

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"Plant this little twig," said the wizard. "Plant it carefully and guard it tenderly, and when it has grown and blossomed, then can the king be well again."

The entire court thanked the wizard for his help, and the chief doctor himself put the twig in the ground and the chief gardener watered it daily and kept out the weeds. It took to the earth at once, growing like magic till it was tall as a tree, and in a year and a day, it bore its first flower. There was only one, and it was like no other flower ever seen before. It seemed made of pure gold, and shone and glittered like jewels between the leaves of the tree.

But on Midsummer's Eve, alas, a dreadful thing happened. The flower disappeared, where or how, no one could guess, and the poor king felt worse than ever.

But the tree kept on growing, and when another year and a day had gone by, it budded once more and bore again a single flower, a great glittering blossom the color of gold. Everyone set great store by it and prayed that nothing would happen to it, but as Midsummer's Eve drew near, there were many anxious faces about the palace, and finally the king's oldest son said, "I will keep special watch

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over the golden flower on Midsummer's Eve. No one will dare to steal it when the eldest son of the king is on guard."

"Very well," said the chief minister, "but mind you watch it well, for it is more than gold you'll be guarding. It will be your father's life."

"Have no fear," said the young prince, and at the appointed time he went into the garden and sat down under the tree. He stayed there the whole night through and never once closed his eyes. But in the morning, alas, the flower was gone, taken where, no one knew, and by whom, no one could guess, and the old king lay as ill as ever.

But the young tree kept growing, and when the third year came round and it again bore a single blossom that glittered like gold, the second son said, "This Midsummer's Eve I will guard the precious flower. I'll be wide awake the whole night through, and I'll catch any thief that dares to come near."

And he did as he promised and sat beneath the tree as wide awake as a night owl. But when morning came, alas, the flower was gone, taken where or how, no one knew or could guess, and the king lay close to death's door.

Then the youngest son whose name was Alex-

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ander said, "Next year I will guard the golden flower."

"But you are too young," said the chief minister.

"I have a strong heart and a quick eye," said Alexander. "I can reach high and run fast."

And so the minister agreed, and the next year it was Alexander who went to keep watch in the garden. But he did not sit under the tree as his brothers had done. He climbed up among the branches till he was close beside the golden flower and could reach out and touch it with his hand.

Nothing happened until the stroke of twelve, and then there was a rustling of wings, and a golden bird came flying between the branches and snapped off the flower with its beak. In an instant Alexander was up and after the culprit, but he could not catch it. The bird slipped through his fingers and he managed to catch only a feather from its tail.

The boy ran sorrowfully back to the castle. "The flower was plucked by a bird that was stronger and swifter than I," he said, and he drew out the golden feather.

"Alas, alack!" cried all the court. "What's to be done now? The king's sons have failed us, and the king grows no better fast."

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"We must call in the wizard again," said the chief doctor, and so the wizard was sent for at once, and he came in a great hurry. He looked at the poor, sick king and saw the golden feather, and then he said, "The king lies ill, indeed. But he needs only to hear the sweet song of the golden bird, and then he'll be well in a trice."

"I will fetch the bird," said the eldest son.

"It lives far away," said the wizard, "far away east and farther still."

"The end of the world is not too far for me to help my father," said the young prince.

"Then you may go," said the wizard, and the young prince was outfitted with servants and knights and bags of gold, and he started on his way.

He traveled for many a day and came at last to a fair land where the sun shone bright, the air was filled with sweet perfume, and young maidens danced over the green grass.

"How beautiful it is here," he said. "Surely this must be the land where the golden bird dwells." And here he stopped, and here he stayed, for the pleasures were many and sweet, and the bird and his father were soon forgotten.

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Now when a good time had passed, and nothing was heard from the oldest son, the second son said, "I will go in search of the golden bird whose song will save my father. I will search high and low, far and wide, and I'll not tarry like my brother."

The chief minister gave permission, and so the second son was outfitted with servants and knights and bags of gold, and he started on his way. And after a time he, too, came to the pleasant land where the sun always shone and the grass was ever green. And he met his brother and tasted sweet pleasures, and soon he, too, forgot his sick father and the search for the golden bird.

Now when neither son returned, the young Prince Alexander came to the minister and said, "Let me go in search of the golden bird. I am neither so wise nor learned as my brothers, but I have a strong heart and a quick eye, and I'll not tarry a moment on the way."

Everyone was loath to part with the king's last and only son, but the boy begged and pleaded, and finally the chief minister said, "Very well, my young prince, you may go on the morrow. You will have servants and knights and bags of gold."

"I'll take only a horse and a handful of coins,"

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said Alexander. "He who travels light travels swift." And in a trice he had mount and money and was on his way.

He followed the same path as his brothers and came at last to the same enchanting land of sunshine and perfumed air. And here he saw his brothers at a ball, and they called him to join them and spend his money on sweet pleasures.

"But I have no money," said Alexander, "and my pleasure is to find the golden bird," and on he rode without stopping.

But now the path grew rough and rugged. It no longer led through blossoming gardens and scented meadows, but over deserts and mountains and rivers and marshes. And in the midst of it, Alexander lost his horse, and he had to go on by himself.

He had not walked far, however, when he met a great red fox, and the fox said to him, "Are you still firm in your purpose to find the golden bird?"

"Yes," said Alexander, "for I cannot fail my father, and 't is only the golden bird that can save him."

"Then climb on my back and I will show you the way," said the fox. "It is far away east and farther still, and you've not breath enough to get there

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by yourself."

"I thank you for your kindness," said the prince, and he climbed on the fox's back, hung tight to his furry hide, and they were off in a flash.

They traveled all day till evening, and then the fox stopped and said, "Look up, Alexander, and tell me what you see."

"I see a great star," said Alexander.

"But 't is not a star," said the fox. "'T is the castle of a young troll king, and in the castle dwells the golden bird. But getting the bird will not be an easy task, so listen carefully and mark well my words. When we reach the castle, I will lay a spell upon it and give you a magic hair that opens locks and bolts at the slightest touch. Then into the castle you must go, opening gates and doors as you need to until you come to the broadest and highest hall. Here you will find the golden bird sitting in a jeweled cage, and beside it you will find a common cage of wood. You must take the bird out of the jeweled cage, slip it into the wooden one, and then hurry away with it straight back to me."

"Thank you," said Alexander. "I will do just that," and the fox leaped on till they reached the castle gate.

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Alexander got down from the fox's back, took the magic hair, and went into the castle. Everyone lay asleep, the king, the guards, the servants and all, and so he went undisturbed from room to room till he came at last to the broadest and highest hall. Here he found the bird in the jeweled cage, its head under its wing, and he took it out carefully and put it into the common cage. But when he did this, alas, the bird's shining beauty disappeared and it looked as gray and dingy as a sparrow.

"This will never do," cried Alexander. "I must take the cage, too." And he set the bird back in the jeweled cage, put it under his arm, and started away.

But no sooner was he out of the door than the bird awoke and screamed frightfully. And then everyone in the castle awakened, too, and the guards rushed forward and captured Alexander. They bound him hand and foot, and he was thrown into a deep, dark prison. Here he wept bitterly, not for himself, but for his dear father, and he cried, "If only the fox were here, I am sure he would help me."

At that moment, he heard a scratching under the door, and in a second the fox stood before him.

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"I am here," said the fox, "but I'll not help a heedless fellow like you."

"Do not speak so," cried Alexander. "'T is not for me, but for my father that I beg."

"Well, just this once, I'll help you," said the fox, "but you must do exactly as I say, and not what strikes your fancy. Do you promise faithfully?"

"With all my heart," said Alexander.

"When day breaks," said the fox, "the guards will take you before the king, and he will ask you if you wish to be hanged by your head or your toes. Then you must say you'll hang neither up nor down, but you'll have the golden bird, and in exchange, you'll bring him the golden horse. To this he'll be sure to agree, for he has long wanted the golden horse, but he has never been able to get it, as its stable is far away east and farther still. He will set you free, and out of the castle you'll come and straight back to me."

"Thank you," said Alexander. "I will do just as you say."

"Good night and good luck," said the fox, and there was a scratching under the door and he was gone again.

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When morning came, Alexander was brought before the king, and when the king asked, "Would you like to be hanged by your head or your toes?" the prince answered, "Neither one nor the other. I want only the golden bird, and in return I will bring you the golden horse. Is that not a fair exchange?"

"Fair as fair," said the king. "You bring me my treasure, and I'll then give you yours." And he set Alexander free at once, and the lad hurried out of the castle and back to the fox.

"Climb upon my back and I will show you the way," said the fox. "The road is long and the journey hard, and you'll never get there on your own two feet."

"I thank you for your kindness," said the prince, and he jumped on the fox's back, held tight to his furry hide, and they were off like the wind.

They traveled all day till evening, and then the fox stopped and said, "Look up, Alexander, and tell me what you see."

"I see the moon rising straight ahead," said the prince.

"'T is not the moon," said the fox. "'T is the castle of another troll king, and in his stable dwells

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the golden horse. But getting the horse will not be an easy task, so listen carefully and mark well my words. When we reach the castle, I will put a spell upon it and give you a magic hair to open all the gates. Then into the courtyard you must go and through the stables till you come to the biggest and best one of all. Here you will find the golden horse with a bit and bridle and saddle of gold. But beside the stall you will find a plain bridle and a common saddle, and these you must exchange for the ones of gold. Then take the horse by the reins and lead it quickly back to me."

"Thank you," said Alexander. "I will do just as you say," and on they went till they reached the castle.

Alexander climbed down from the fox's back, took the magic hair, and went into the courtyard. Everyone lay asleep, guards and stable boys and all, and Alexander went quickly from stable to stable till he came at last to the one that was biggest and best. Here he found the golden horse. It was the most beautiful creature ever seen in the world with eyes like rubies, a mane fine as spun silk, and tiny pearl hoofs.

"Oh, my!" cried Alexander. "A plain bridle and

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a common saddle will never do for such a fine animal." And so he left on the bridle and saddle of gold. But no sooner had he led the horse outside than it set up a dreadful neighing and prancing that awakened the whole castle. Out rushed a flock of trolls, and they scratched and pinched poor Alexander and dragged him off to the king.

"So you've come to steal the golden horse!" said the king. "Well, you're a brave thief, you are, and for that you'll suffer loud and long. Would you rather be burned alive or boiled alive?"

"Neither one nor the other," said Alexander. "I seek the golden horse, for I need the golden bird."

"Well," said the troll king, "I treasure the golden horse, but there's a fair maiden I treasure more. Now, young man, if you'll but bring her to me, I'll give you the horse, and the saddle and bridle to boot."

"What is her name, and where does she dwell?" asked Alexander.

"She is the fair Helene, and she lives far away east, and farther still."

"I will get her if I can," said Alexander.

Then the troll king let him go, and out of the castle he ran and back to the fox.

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"It's a hard task you've given yourself," said the fox.

"But surely you will help me," said Alexander.

"That I will not," said the fox. "You've been too foolish and unfaithful."

"'T is not for myself that I beg," cried Alexander, "but only for my poor father."

"Very well then," said the fox. "Since you ask so earnestly, I'll not say no. Climb on my back and we'll be off."

Alexander climbed on his back, clutched his furry hide tight, and they were off in a flash. They traveled all day till evening, and then the fox stopped and said, "Look up, Alexander, and tell me what you see."

"I see the sun rising in the east," said Alexander.

"'T is not the sun," said the fox. "'T is the castle of another troll king, and there you will find the fair Helene. But it will not be easy to reach her, and if you fail, you are truly lost and none can save you, so listen carefully, and mark well my words."

"I will do that, indeed," said Alexander.

"The fair Helene is imprisoned in the farthest room in the highest tower of the castle," said the

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fox. "The castle itself is surrounded by a wall of fire and three walls of stone with gates heavily guarded, the first by two bears, the second by two lions, and the last by two dragons. Now I can cast a spell over the fair Helene, and over the trolls and the bears and the lions and the dragons, but I cannot put out the fire. I can only quench it a little, and if you are to win your quest, you must dash through the fire without burning alive. Then you must open the gates with the magic hair and run into the castle and up the stairs to the top of the highest tower. Here you will find the fair Helene, and without stopping to admire her beauty, you must take off her crown, cover her face with her long golden hair, and fly down the stairs and back to me."

"Thank you," said Alexander. "I will do just as you say," and on they sped till they reached the castle.

The fox cast a spell over everything, then quenched the fire a little, and Alexander wrapped his cloak about him and dashed through the fire. With his magic hair he opened the gates and ran into the castle and up the stairs till he came to the room where the fair Helene was imprisoned. She

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lay slumbering on a couch, and her beauty was dazzling indeed, but the prince remembered the words of the fox, and so without stopping a moment to admire her, he put his arms around her and took off her crown.

But when he did this, alas, a terrible thing happened. The fair Helene faded away, and in her place lay an old witch.

"I'll not waste my young strength on an old, old witch," cried Alexander, and he turned to run away empty-handed. Then again he remembered the words of the fox, so he picked up the old witch, wrapped her in her long gray hair, and ran down the stairs and back to the fox.

"Jump on and hold fast," cried the fox, and Alexander tossed the old witch onto the fox's back, climbed on himself and held tight to the furry hide. Away they went like the wind, skimming heather and heath, marsh and mire till they were back at the troll king's castle.

There the fox stopped and said, "Sit up and look at the old witch now, Alexander."

Alexander looked, and much to his joy he saw that it wasn't a witch that he carried, but the fair Helene, as young and beautiful as ever, with eyes

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blue as the sky and hair like gold. And there and then he fell in love with her and wished he might have her for his bride. But, alas, 't was only the golden bird he could hope for.

"That is not so," said the fox. "Just listen carefully and mark well my words, and the fair Helene shall be yours. When you go into the castle, you must say, 'Here is your treasure, now give me mine,' and the horse will be brought at once, for the king will be more than pleased with the bargain. Then as you mount the horse, ready to ride away, the fair Helene must say, 'What a thoughtless lass I am, for I've not thanked the brave lad who saved me,' and out she will come to you. Then in a trice you must catch her round the waist, swing her onto the horse and say, 'Go up, golden horse, go up,' and the horse will rise like a bird. He will take you far above the clouds where no one can see you, and you'll ride along like a breeze till you say, 'Go down, golden horse, go down.' Then down you'll glide, and I'll be there to meet you."

With this advice, Alexander and the fair Helene went into the castle, and everything happened just as the fox had said. The troll king was so happy he hardly knew whether to stand on his feet or his

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head, the horse was brought out at once—gold bit and bridle and saddle and all—and Alexander mounted it and made ready to go.

Then the fair Helene cried to the troll king, "What a thoughtless lass I am. I quite forgot to thank the brave lad who saved me and brought me here. With your permission, dear king, I will do it now," and out the door she ran and up to Alexander.

In a trice Alexander had her on the horse. Then he commanded, "Go up, golden horse, go up," and before the king could blink an eyelash, they were up in the air and no more to be seen.

They traveled for a bit of a time, and then Alexander said, "Go down, golden horse, go down," and down they floated till they reached the ground. The fox, faithful as ever, was waiting for them, and they all went on together, skimming heather and heath, marsh and mire till they came to the castle of the young troll king.

Alexander patted the horse and sighed. "A finer, fairer horse I'll never see," he said. "I would that I could keep it. But 't is only the golden bird that I can hope for."

"That is not so," said the fox. "Just listen care-

fully and mark well my words, and the golden horse will be yours. When you reach the high hall where the king keeps the golden bird, you must say, 'I have brought you your treasure, now bring me mine.' But do not dismount from your horse, and when the king has put the bird in your hands, then in a trice you must say, 'Go up, golden horse, go up,' and before the king can catch his breath, you'll be up in the sky and out of sight."

With this advice, Alexander and the fair Helene went through the castle gates and up to the high hall. The golden bird was sitting in its jeweled cage singing a song so sweet that it banished all sorrow and sadness. The king sat on his throne keeping close watch over his treasure, and he beckoned Alexander and the fair Helene to come in.

But Alexander sat firm on his horse. "I have brought you your treasure," he said. "Now bring me mine."

"Very well," said the troll, and down he came with the sweet singing bird, and down reached the prince and took it from him. Then he said, "Go up, golden horse, go up," and up went the horse before the troll could draw a breath. They flew along like a breeze for a bit of a time, and then Alexander



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said, "Go down, golden horse, go down," and down they floated till they reached the ground not far from the lad's own castle.

Here the fox was waiting for them and he said, "I have helped you for the last time, and now we must part, for you have everything you could wish, and more, too. You have a golden bird that will cure your father and sing all your sorrows away. You have a horse that shines like the sun and travels like the wind. You have the fair Helene to be your bride."

"I am the happiest of princes," said Alexander, "and I owe it all to you, but, alas, how can I ever repay you?"

"That is easy," said the fox. "Will you do just as I say and not as you wish or want?"

"I will indeed," said Alexander.

"Then take out your sword," said the fox, "and cut off my tail and lay it at my head, and cut off my head and lay it at my tail."

"Oh, but I cannot do that," cried Alexander. "You saved my life. I cannot take yours."

"It is my wish, and you have promised," said the fox.

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"Very well," said Alexander. "Your wish is my command." And he drew his sword and did as the fox had asked. But no sooner had he finished than the fox disappeared and in his place stood a handsome king in royal robes with a crown upon his head.

"I am the father of the fair Helene," said the king, "and you have broken the spell that the trolls put upon me when they stole my beautiful daughter."

The princess was overjoyed to see her long lost father, and he took her in his arms, and then they all hurried on to the castle. There they found the old king quite ready to die, but Alexander knelt beside him and the bird began to sing, and in a trice he was cured and was up and around again.

Then the prince and the fair Helene were married, and the two kings stood beside them, and on the right was the golden bird, and on the left the golden horse. After the wedding, they all sat down to a fine banquet and there was feasting the whole night through, and in the morning, both kings took off their crowns and gave them to Alexander. They spent their days riding the golden horse by

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turns, and Alexander and the fair Helene sat on the throne and governed wisely and well. As for the golden bird, it kept on singing for all of them, and whoever heard its song knew neither sickness nor sorrow, and everyone lived happily ever after.



